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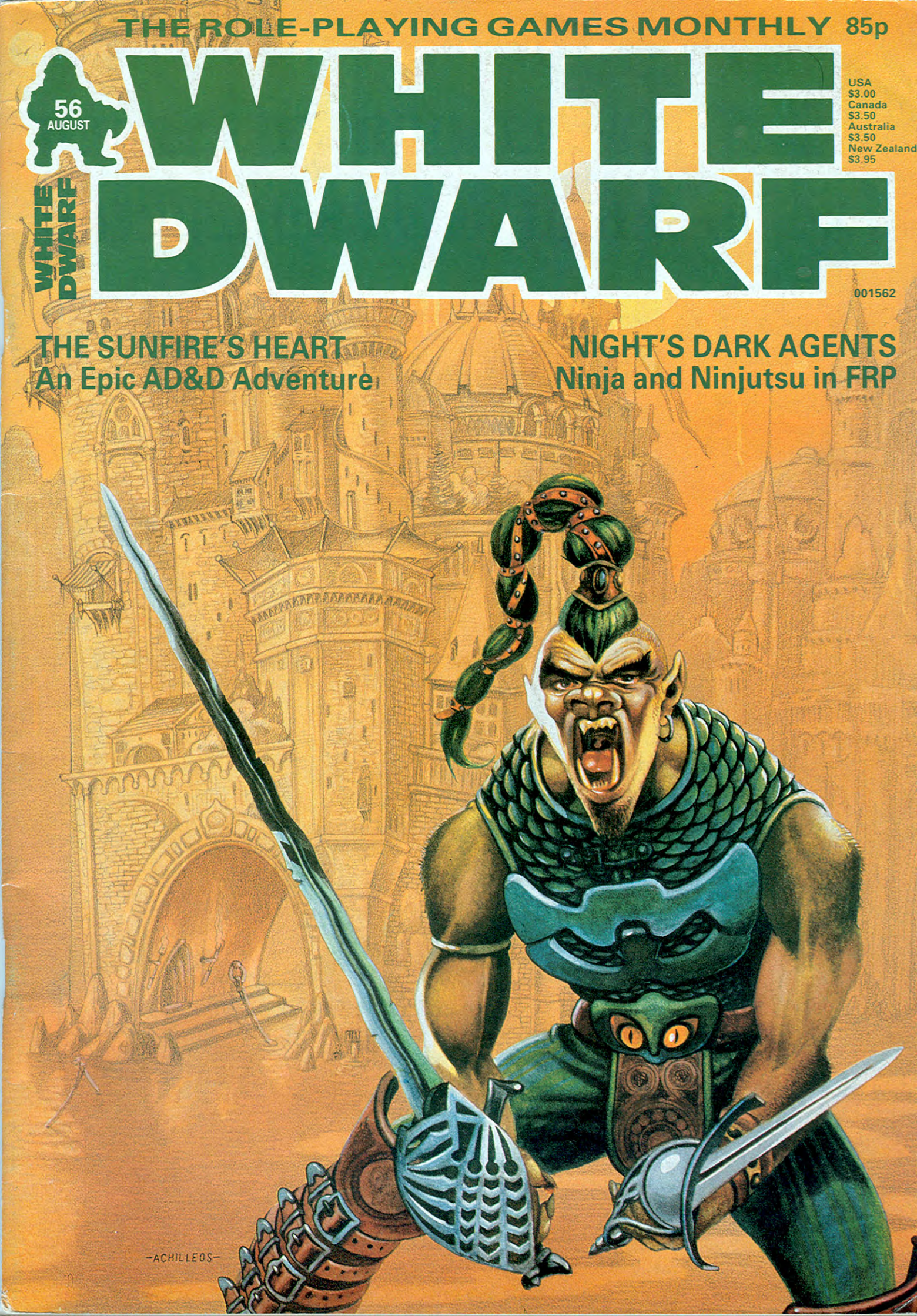
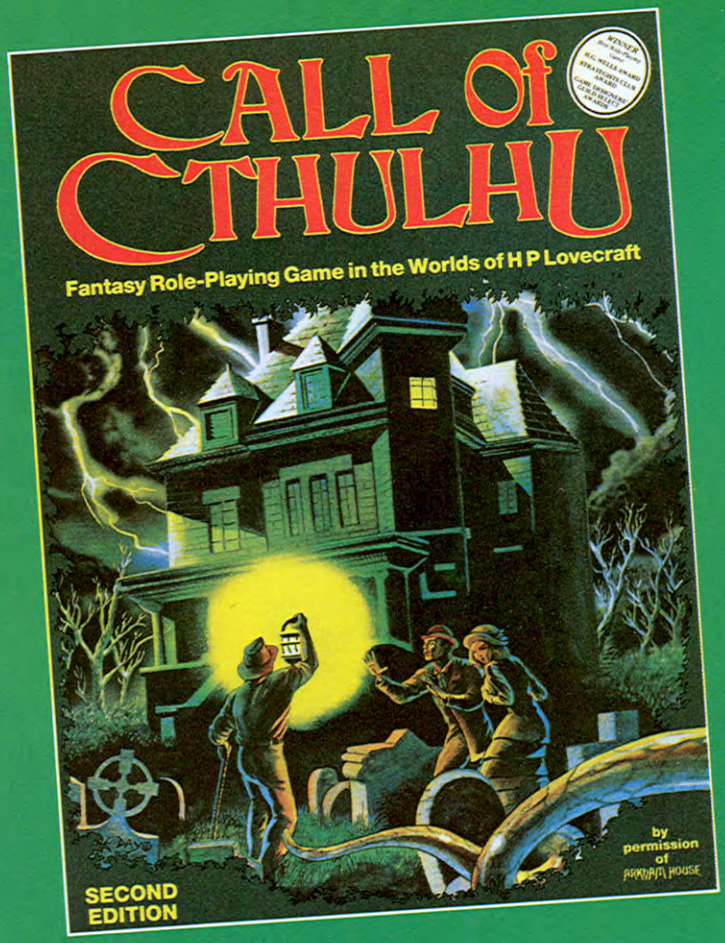


In Call of Cthulhu even librarians get bitten by the Formless Spawn of Tsathoggua



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Hello, my loves. Gunatha sends his apologies (I think that's what he said - he had his mouth full at the time), but his Uncle Ugbash is using him to hold up one end of the plank whilst the ceiling is being repainted. So at the last moment, your favourite auntie was called on to step into the breach, so to speak. That young Gunatha, he is such a tearaway (or at least, I think that was what he was doing to that hobbit's arms), so it's nice to see him doing something useful for a change. His heart's in the right place (nailed to the wall above his bed, as I recall).

I must say, Zlargh's redecoration is doing wonders for the mail order catacombs. The painting's nearly finished, the formica-topped butchering tables have arrived, and the whole dank, dark, dismal dungeon is looking wonderfully ghastly ! It's a pity they couldn't get the scorch-marks off the floor from last month's *Golden Heroes* game, that's all the fault of that stupid Agaroth. Serves him right for not letting me play, doesn't it ? I'd really set my heart on being Catwoman, but old slime-face said the costume made me look more like Pigman ! Anyway, I'm off to bake some ground-glass scones for his tea. Don't forget to read my Problem Page every issue in Black Sun ..... it'll tear you up !

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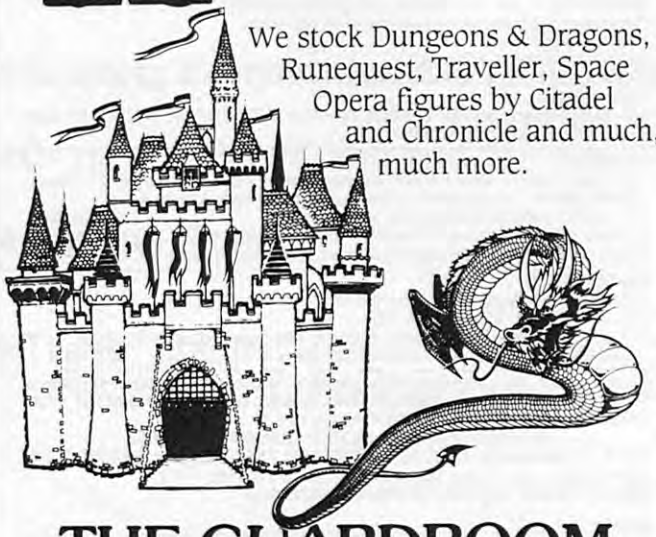

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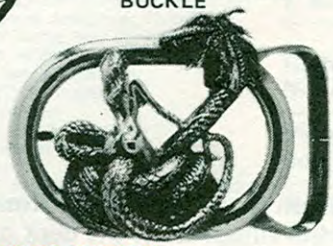

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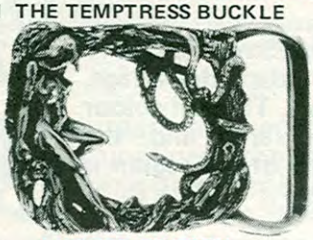

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After nearly a decade of domination of the role-playing games market by American companies, it is good to see British companies publishing their own systems at last. *Games Workshop* are hoping to release both *Dr Who* and *Judge Dredd* RPGs later in the year and *Citadel* will be further developing *Warhammer*. Following the success of *Puffin's Fighting Fantasy Gamebooks*, other book companies are busy releasing solo gamebooks. More companies are following *Citadel's* lead in fantasy figures and new magazines are appearing.

Let's hope that this is a sign of things to come and more companies will emerge to make a thriving British RPG industry.

Ian Livingstone

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NIGHT'S DARK AGENTS

Ninja and Ninjutsu in Role-Playing Games by Chris Elliott and Richard Edwards

He whose sable arms, Black as his purpose, did the night resemble.

Hamlet II ii

For the most part, introducing elements of Japanese society into RPGs doesn't present too many problems. It is fairly easy to get information from libraries on the samurai, and provided appropriate allowances are made for the effects of the Japanese social system, players and referees can draw on European feudal models for commoners, the priesthood, magicians and thieves without going too badly astray. The ninja, however, are different. They have no real counterpart in European history, and despite their continuing popularity as subjects for books, films and television series, reliable information about them is hard to come by. This is not really surprising; all feudal Japanese institutions were obsessively secret, and the nature of ninjutsu means it would be doubly so. This series of articles is designed to explain who the ninja were, how they operated, and how they can be incorporated into role-playing games.

The Art of Stealth

Some estimates put the beginnings of ninjutsu as early as 500BC, and they are recorded as having been hired as spies by Prince Regent Shotoku Taishi in the 6th century AD. Their last major use was in 1637, during the Shimbara war against Christian rebels on Kyushu, but there is good reason to believe that ninja were active in government service during the Taisho era, 1912-1926, and even in the Showa era, which began in 1926 and is still continuing today. Ninjutsu is therefore probably as old as Japanese history, but it has not remained unchanged, and this helps to explain the conflicting accounts of its origins. Like most Japanese institutions, ninjutsu seems to have come from Chinese influence on a native tradition, with the resulting product being uniquely Japanese. Prince Shotoku Taishi not only hired ninja, he was also a keen supporter of Buddhism, introduced about forty years before he came to power, and Chinese learning in general. Both of these, indirectly, were crucial to the development of ninjutsu. The Chinese classic *Sun Tzu* – The Art of War – eagerly taken up by Japanese generals, had a section on espionage which is likely to have influenced the existing Japanese tradition. (The characters for ninjutsu can be read as 'shinobi jutsu', from shinobi 'to steal in', and jutsu 'art' or 'technique'; hence, 'the art of stealth'.) During the bloody Gempei Wars between the Taira and Minamoto clans in 1180-1185, the Minamoto are said to have relied heavily on ninjutsu. Minamoto Yoshitsune, who finally defeated the Taira, is known to have studied the Sun Tzu, and allegedly had special training in ninjutsu. Early ninjutsu seems, therefore, to have been primarily a technique of military espionage.

Around the 9th and 10th centuries esoteric (secret) Buddhist teachings began to arrive from mainland China. These were spread by sects which, in contrast to those preaching Buddhism to the population in general, reserved their teachings for initiates. In 806, the monk Kukai had returned from China and introduced the Shingon sect, which established its headquarters at Mount Koya. Shingon Buddhism, the *School of the True Word*, practised Mikkyo, or secret doctrines involving mystical practices. In theory, these brought enlightenment which would allow students to tap the powers of the Buddha/Universe. In practice, they were a form of magic through incantations and spells, and the best known are the kuji-no-in, the 'nine signs'. (These appear in *Bushido* as the kuji-kuri, but were more than just a sign language. The hand positions which form the signs are shown in the book of the BBC series. *The Way of the Warrior*, together with an explanation of how they were used.) Although Zen Buddhism is usually associated with the samurai, it was not introduced until nearly four hundred years after Shingon Buddhism, and many higher ranking samurai practised esoteric Buddhism. The ninja also absorbed these teachings, and it was their use of mikkyo practices which helped to give them a reputation for sorcerous powers. Along with the secret teachings of Chinese Buddhism came warrior monks teaching the martial arts, and generals and commanders fleeing the collapsing T'ang dynasty. All of these were to influence the survivors of defeated clans who fled to the mountainous provinces of south central Honshu in the 12th, 13th, and 14th centuries. Such refugees became jizamurai (samurai living like farmers) or lost samurai status altogether, but in the course of fighting for survival against superior forces, they became the nuclei of the ninja clans. This fight had the effect of making them close allies of the warrior monks, especially the yamabushi, who made frequent use of them in their power struggle with the samurai.

On the principle of 'once bitten, twice shy', the ninja never abandoned the secrecy that had enabled them to survive and had given ninjutsu its emphasis on subtle manipulation of an opponent, rather than direct force, but in time they came to wield considerable power. There were over 25 major centres of ninja activity in Iga and Koga provinces in Kamakura times, and at one time they virtually controlled Kyoto by night. During the civil war which raged for over 80 years until Ieyasu unified Japan, they flourished. Despite the alleged abhorrence with which the samurai regarded the ninja, the relationship between them was intimate. Oda Nobunaga, who smashed the power of the Buddhist warrior monks, is also recorded as sending 46,000 troops against the ninja of Momochi Sandayu, boss of Koga province, in 1581. This did not prevent him employing his own ninja, led by one Kenpachi, who he sent against his enemies, such as Uesugi Kenshin. (It helps explain the fear inspired by the ninja when you learn that Kasumi Danjo, the leader of Uesugi's own ninja, had survived an ambush in which the rest of his colleagues had fallen, and killed the assassin threatening Kenshin, that his employer was still killed by Ukifune Jinnai, a dwarf ninja who had hidden himself, armed with a spear, inside Kenshin's privy.) Takeda Shingen, famous from Kurosawa's *Kagemusha*, made great use of the ninja, and is credited with important advances in their signalling and message techniques. The power of the ninja at that time is shown by the fact that he also attacked Momochi Sandayu, sending a ninja called Hajika no Jubei.

With the establishment of the Tokugawa shogunate, and the unification of Japan, the role of the ninja changed again. The rising power of the merchant class brought employment from this quarter, and they were also a key part of the system that enabled the Tokugawas to dominate the country for over 250 years. The metsuke, or 'censors' are best known now for their seals on woodblock prints, but they were also the shogunate's secret police, and the ninja, particularly the Hattori family of Koga, were notorious as their agents. With the coming of peace to Japan, ninjutsu lost the hostile climate to be a way of life for an entire section of the population. Although ninjutsu is still taught to a handful of students, preserved like other links with the past, the shadow warriors are like the samurai; their modern descendents are very different people, in a different world. Like the samurai, though, the ninja are the stuff of legend, and with the advent of role-playing games seem set for a new lease of life.

The Artists of Stealth

The historical pressures that created and shaped the ninja and ninjutsu produced a remarkable breed of men and women. A ninja was born into a subculture where secrecy was a way of life, and whose outlook was supremely practical. This not only meant that they acquired a formidable array of specialised techniques and devices, but also that they became adept at achieving their ends through ingenious uses (or abuses) of items in

general use, and the manipulation of their opponents.

Ninja training began early, at about five or six years old, with the development of balance and agility. At about nine the training concentrated on suppleness and flexibility, with the result that adult ninja could squeeze through tiny openings, hide in minute spaces, and like Harry Houdini, dislocate their joints at will. The young ninja also practised the basic techniques of unarmed combat, and later use of the sword and staff. Associated with each clan was a ryu (school or teaching) of ninjutsu, and from about twelve onwards, ninja were taught the special weapons and techniques of their ryu. They also made long runs to develop stamina, and spent hours in cramped quarters or hanging from trees to build patience and endurance. Swimming techniques, on and under the surface, woodcraft, and silent movement were also important. Later in their training, they were taught techniques of entry and escape, mapping and sketching, the preparation of medicines and chemicals, and the skills of acting and applied psychology that were so important to them.

Just as the roles of the ninja can be summarised for convenience as spy, commando and assassin, so the techniques and equipment used by them can be grouped under a number of headings. In other articles in this series, we will look in more detail at incorporating ninjutsu into *AD&D* and *RuneQuest*, and develop it in *Bushido*, but for those of you who use another system, the following can serve as a basis from which to work. It is a reasonably comprehensive, but by no means complete summary of the skills and tools of ninjutsu. If you are not familiar with Japanese history and martial arts, the names may look a bit daunting, but whenever possible we have given translations. Two tips may also help; try breaking the words down into syllables, eg Shuriken-jutsu becomes shu-ri-ken-ju-tsu (follow the bouncing ball!) and remember that 'jutsu' on the end of anything simply means 'art' or 'technique'.

Costume: Unless disguised, a ninja on a mission would wear the traditional shinobi-shozoku, consisting of split toed shoes, trousers, jacket, gloves and hood. This was black or reddish black, and reversable. The inside was dark blue, green or white. (Japan has a very snowy winter).

Stealth: The ninja were expert in moving undetected, indoors and outdoors, in any terrain. They took advantage of cover and natural sounds, camouflaged themselves, and used a variety of techniques to confuse or distract the attention of scouts or guards. They had at least ten different techniques of footwork for moving over various surfaces, including 'nightingale' floors which were designed to squeak loudly when stepped on. The ninja employed special swimming techniques to move silently, and could hide underwater for long periods, breathing through a tube or from an air bag.

Endurance and Agility: Because of their training, ninja were capable of extraordinary feats. They were alleged to be able to cover 300 miles in three days, and run without resting for up to 125 miles. The techniques of forced march used were called hayagake-jutsu. The technique of suppleness (nawanake-jutsu) has already been referred to, and allowed ninja not only to hide in confined spaces and pass through small gaps, but to escape from bindings or chains. Karumi-jutsu, or 'lightning' enabled the ninja to perform amazing feats of climbing and jumping, including the famous 'chakuzen-jutsu' – walking across walls or ceilings by using minute holds – or leaping up into the shadowy roof of a corridor to hide spread-eagled against the walls.

Survival and Woodcraft: Their operations often called for the ninja to live off the land, and they were accomplished trackers. The ability to move swiftly and without detection across all kinds of terrain made them dangerous opponents in wartime.

Martial Arts: Although it's convenient to divide these into armed and unarmed techniques, in practice this was not a rigid division. Jujutsu, the ancestor of modern judo and aikido, has been defined as the art of combat with minimum use of weapons. A ninja could fight with or without weapons, but would use whatever technique or mixture of techniques were most effective.

Unarmed: The ninja's weaponless combat system was known as taijutsu, and fell into two main techniques. Daken-taijutsu 'the way of attacking the bones' covered striking, kicking and blocking techniques. Ju-taijutsu 'relaxed body method' dealt with grappling and throwing techniques. Two more specialised techniques koppojutsu – 'bone breaking' and yubijutsu – 'nerve strikes' or attacks against the vital nerve centres of the body to paralyse, render unconscious or kill.

'What was that?'
'I don't know. Where?'
'There! A gleam of silvered steel in the moonlight – or a trick of the shadows, perhaps?'

Armed: Generally speaking, all ninja were proficient with at least three weapons, and some were expert in as many as twenty. The four systems below were the most commonly used.

Sword: The ninjato, or ninja sword, was a slightly shorter weapon than the samurai's katana. Seldom decorated, its guard, the tsuba, was large and square, and the scabbarded sword could be used as a step up. The scabbard itself could contain powder to scatter in an opponent's eyes, be used as a probe, or with a removable tip become a breathing tube or a blowgun. Ninja were expert in iaijutsu, a technique where the drawing of the sword and the first attack are all part of the same lightning-fast movement.

Sticks and Staves: Favourite weapons of the ninja, because they were readily improvised and formed part of many of the disguises they adopted, as well as being less obviously a weapon than a spear. Three main sizes were used; the 6' bo, the 4' jo, and the 3' long hambo (half-bo). Locks could be applied with the shorter staves to subdue an enemy. As many samurai learned to their cost, when clashing with city patrolmen, a blow from a staff could shatter the finest blade like a twig.

Chains and Cords: Many Japanese weapons were modified by adding a chain or cord with which to attack or entangle an opponent. The kusari-gama, a rice sickle with a chain and weight on the hilt, was used by the samurai, but the similar kyoketsu shogei, which had a right angled blade and a hair rope, was unique to the ninja. The manriki-gusari, a chain with a weight at both ends, was known as a kusari-fundo when used by ninja. The kawa-naga, a grappling hook on a rope, was a climbing tool, but could also double as a weapon.

Throwing Blades: Known collectively as shuriken, these can be straight blades, ranging from needles to knives, or multi-pointed throwing stars. Although they could be poisoned, their main use was to distract or harass guards and pursuers. Shuriken could also be used in close-range combat.

Gimmicks and Concealed Weapons: These were a trademark of the ninja. The shinobi-zue – 'ninja staff' – could contain a chain, sword or blinding powder, and be used as a smokescreen generator or blowgun. (Using a technique call fuki-buri-jutsu, ninja could spit poisoned darts). Known as metsubushi, the blinding powders were usually made from ashes, pepper and sand, and could be thrown in 'eggs' which shattered on impact. Caltrops, or tetsubushi, were scattered to slow pursuit. A variety of collapsible ladders were used, as were nekode or shuko, hooked 'gloves' for climbing, and the shinobi kumade – 'ninja rake' – which telescoped out to form a climbing aid. A variety of bombs, mines, grenades, flash grenades and smoke bombs or powders were made use of, ignited from the doko or firepot concealed in the costume, or triggered by tripwires.

Chemistry and Herbalism: These arts were used to prepare medicines, poisons and many of the gimmicks mentioned above.

Hypnotism: Very little is known about saiminjutsu, the ninja art of hypnotism. Much was probably achieved by sleight of hand and the equivalent of conjurors tricks, but under the conditions most people met them, the ninja must have seemed sorcerors, able to work magic. Their use of the kuji-no-in, the mystic hand signs of Mikkyo Buddhism also contributed to this reputation.

Disguise: Although normally thought of as black-clad assassins, the ninja often used to disguise themselves as members of other groups, usually those found travelling the country. The most common were called the shichi-ho-de (seven ways of going):

1. Yamabushi – Mountain warrior-priest.
2. Sarugaku – Actor or entertainer.
3. Komuso – Wandering ascetic priest.
4. Ronin – Masterless samurai.
5. Akindo – Merchant.
6. Hokashi – Musician.
7. Shukke – Buddhist monk.

Next month, creating and playing ninja characters; more on ninja skills and equipment and an introduction to ninja tactics.□

BATTLEBIKES
Games Workshop Ltd **£4.95**

There are no surprises in this, the first supplement for *Games Workshop's* highly successful, *Battlecars*. As the name suggests, *Battlebikes* introduces two-wheeled warriors into the game of deadly driving.

In the box, there are cards and counters for six different bikes and for six pedestrians, more weapon counters of the kind supplied in *Battlecars* (including lots of rockets that the motorcycles cannot use), plus the usual reference sheets and damage counters.

The rule book has two scenarios, as well as individual additions to the *Battlecars* rules (the most important being related to pedestrians and movement modifiers incurred through engine and tyre damage). There are also all the rule amendments for riding armoured motorcycles.

Major changes are that bikes have a maximum speed of 10, and can avoid trees, mines and spikes with some clever driving. This improved speed and manoeuverability gives the bikes an advantage over the cars in movement,

but the motorcycles are far more vulnerable in combat, having less armour and only two wheels to balance on. Two bikes work out as being roughly equal to a car.

This is the basis of the second and best scenario; *Smokey Joe's Cafe*. The Scarlet Dukes (2 Battlecars) take on the *Black Angels* (4 Battlebikes) who are making trouble in Smokey Joe's. This game has a nice balance, with the spare bike parked outside the cafe often playing a crucial role.

The first scenario is *'Raid on Taccoville'*, where the townsfolk (7 pedestrians) try to stop the Black Angels (3 Battlebikes) from robbing the bank. This is fun for those who like carnage, but trying to keep track of seven pedestrians can be a frustrating job.

Two wheeled warriors have now hit the road (and they do... *often*) – the introduction of armoured motorcycles is a welcome addition. The scenarios are the nicest feature of this supplement, and I hope there'll be more printed in the future. If you liked *Battlecars* then *Battlebikes* is a winner, though a few new weapons would have been nice.

Overall: 7

Ian Waddelow

In Open Box, *science fiction and fantasy games and rulebooks currently in the shops are reviewed by independent authorities. Ratings are on a scale from 1 to 10, in several categories, or as a single overall mark for accessories.*

OPEN BOX

TURBOFIRE
Auto Ventures **£4.50**

Auto Ventures is a new company, producing scenario modules for the most popular vehicle combat systems; *Car Wars, Battlecars*, and *Highway 2000*. This first is a race game, set in Quebec but containing enough information to set up a world racing championship.

CanAm duel racing crosses Grand Prix racing and normal road duelling, with dramatically improved vehicles and tracks. The rules include the information needed to design the cars and run races, plus details of NPCs, the track, the history of CanAm racing, and a slightly dubious historical background which includes Britain as the number one superpower, a Tsarist revival in Russia, and the power disintegration of the United States into separate power blocs.

The rules on vehicle design and handling add new areas to all three systems. For *Car Wars* there are two new vehicle bodies, plus appropriate power plants, tyres, suspension, and weapons. The handling track is extended to 220MPH. *Battlecars* adds some modified vehicle layouts, an expanded speed track (to 15), expanded drift track, and gunners. I've not played *Highway 2000* and can't tell how significant the changes are, but some certainly exist. A section at the end of the book explains how to convert between the three systems, and should be useful for scenarios which aren't written for all three games.

Race rules are reasonably simple, but involve a lot of calculation. The cars are

sorted into starting rank and as the race starts each driver rolls to see if an error has been made, which would result in changes in position during the first five laps, and for the spacing between vehicles at the end of this time. Combat is prohibited until this period has elapsed.

Most attacks are supposed to disable or slow opponents, and there is an 'unwritten rule' that any driver who deliberately kills will be attacked by everyone else in the race. Either car in a combat can break off, falling back out of range of the opponent.

Once all combats are resolved the procedure is repeated at five-lap intervals until only one car survives, or at least one car has achieved 115 laps. This results in a fairly lengthy race, and can leave players out of combat for several turns.

A section on role-playing covers NPC characters, ranging from Howard Smythe, the British champion, to Wyndy, queen of the duel-racing groupies, and gives advice on running the race circuit as part of other games. *James Bond* and *Espionage* are mentioned, and the setup seems ideal for *Autoduel Champions*.

I think it would be possible to simplify some of the game mechanics to speed play and ensure that everyone gets involved in the action, but this would lessen realism. The conversion advice and new vehicle components are useful features of an excellent debut.

Presentation:	8	**Enjoyment:**	8
Playability:	7	**Complexity:**	8
Skill:	7	**Rules:**	8
Overall:	8	**Marcus L Rowland**	

HARN **£15.95**
CITIES OF HARN **£8.95**
ENCYCLOPEDIA HARNICA **£4.95**
Columbia Games Inc

Columbia Games have produced a role-playing games supplement in several parts which, they claim is the 'ultimate environmental play aid'. This is the island of Harn, on the planet of Kethira. The series of aids outline in some detail its geography, climate, history, religions and peoples.

Harn, the master module, comes in three parts. First is a large, colourful 22" by 34" hex-gridded map of Harn which would look good on any wall, and contains a surprising amount of information about the island. Second is *Harnview*, a 32-page handbook which contains an overview of the island's cultures, religions and economics together with sections on generating a Harnic background for your character, encounters and some suggested scenarios; none of which are mandatory but all of which show careful thought – apparently, the entire series has been written and re-written nine times – and could prove useful. Third is *Harndex*, a 64-page index which manages to cram into those pages a wealth of information on a wealth of subjects. There are over a thousand entries and although there are one or two surprising omissions – no entry on magic, for example – there's still plenty for a gamesmaster to chew on.

Cities of Harn details the seven major cities of the island with some excellent maps. Each city is shown three ways: a full colour map, a black and white players' map and a black and white gamesmaster's map, all to the same scale. Additionally there are com-

prehensive keys and each city has at least one interior diagram of an important building.

Encyclopedia Harnica is quite a concept, building up in monthly issues a complete guide to the interesting parts of Harn.

The first three volumes contain information on the dwarvish inhabitants of Harn, Harnic Law, Manorial Economics (more complex than you would think) and each volume contains maps of typical Harnic settlements – a manor, a dwarvish city and so on.

Encyclopedia Harnica is available on subscription, and feedback is invited from readers. This last point leads my suspicious mind to wonder just what is happening with the content of each volume of the encyclopedia. Is copy being prepared for the next edition in only four weeks? If so, we can expect to see a decline in quality as time goes on.

On the whole, *Harn* is a useful aid to almost any FRPG, but there are one or two points of which you should be aware before rushing out to buy it. First, role-playing any kind of character in *Harn* other than a human will give you problems. There just isn't enough information on the other races for satisfactory role-playing. Secondly, Harn is a magic-weak world; magic plays little part in the inhabitants' daily lives and indeed the cultures are so constructed as to break down remarkably quickly if players start wielding 30th level magic users in their vicinity. Third and finally, *Harn* contains no NPC statistics at all. Omitted to make it easier to adapt the game to any RPG system, they will, however, mean a lot of work for the gamesmaster.

Presentation:	**8**	**Enjoyment:**	**7**
Playability:	**6**	**Content:**	**7**
Overall:	**6**		

Simon Farrell

THE FOREVER WAR
Mayfair Games
£16.95

The Forever War is a 2 to 6 player game in *Mayfair's* series of games based on famous novels – in this case Joe Haldeman's award-winning story of 'Starship-Trooper-as-it-really-will-be!'

The components are of a good sturdy standard, with a geomorphic and interlocking mounted map board, 252 die cut, back printed counters representing the Human troops, their leaders and heavy weapons, the Taurans and their heavy weapons (Taurans have no leaders as they are clones with a group mind); a 30-page book of rules and scenarios; and two 6-sided dice.

The rules are quite simple and straightforward to learn (there are a few annoying typos that crop up, but these cause no game problems). They cover movement, ranged fire, melee, rallying, terrain effects and tech level. Tech level is probably the most important concept, as it was in the book. Time dilation in travelling between stars means that when forces meet they may come from different 'ages' and consequently have more or less advanced weapons. This is simulated by the player with the higher tech level being given a column shift on the combat table for each level difference when engaging in ranged combat (not melee).

A player with a lower tech level force needs to get into melee as soon as possible. The scenarios allow you to choose between forces of varying size and tech level (later tech levels bring on drones, laser towers, space fighters and eventually the Stasis field).

Combat is extremely bloody especially

when low tech level forces are being attacked by higher tech level forces. Terrain plays quite an important role in the game as the only way to be safe is to be out of line of sight! Craters, fissures and mountains provide a small defensive benefit, whilst Hydrogen ice fields allow extremely rapid movement at the expense of almost total vulnerability!

The Stasis field is a whole new game. Once in it, units are invulnerable to standard combat. When the defender has moved all his units inside it (this is forced by a group morale rule) the map is set up again, this time with a different scale, and represents the inside of the field. The units are flipped over to their 'stasis field' sides and combat becomes one of swords, quarterstaffs, archers and the powerful Tauran catapult.

Twelve scenarios and a 'design your own scenario' package are provided, but these seem just to give different force mixes to achieve basically the same objective in each. Winning consists of occupying a hex chosen by the defender as the location of his underground base (or preventing this) or wiping out the other side! Not terribly imaginative, although again quite faithful to the book.

Forever War is an enjoyable, simple SF ground combat game for those who want a good battle without and extra problems to bother with (like logistics for example). For those who require more detail *Starship Troopers* is probably better value (it's cheaper too!!).

Presentation:	**8**	**Enjoyment:**	**7**
Playability:	**8**	**Complexity:**	**4**
Skill:	**7**	**Rules:**	**7**
Overall:	**7**		

Russell Clarke

Critical Mass *is a regular book review column written by Dave Langford.*

From the Sickbed

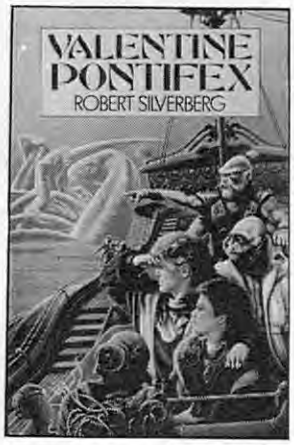
I type this half-dead from the foulest cold I can remember. Have friends of L R Hubbard blown subtle virus-dust through my letterbox? Could the Home Secretary be using KGB methods as reproof for my hideous insinuations about Ministry of Defence life, in that wonderful novel *The Leaky Establishment* [*Frederick Muller* 197pp £8.95, buy one for every room in the house]? Or is it a *White Dwarf* editorial purge, like the recent one at *Imagine*™ which clobbered the erstwhile column of Pete Tamlyn[RIP]? Undaunted your hero sniffles onward, thanks to a Philtre of Untiring Verbosity provided by the mage Glenfiddich...

Fattest book this month, despite hefty competition, is Donald Kingsbury's *Geta* [*Granada* 512pp £2.50], printed in the USA as *Courtship Rite* and shortlisted for the Hugo. It must be the first novel I've read which actually lives up to its blurb about the 'mighty *Dune* tradition.' *Geta* is an even harsher planet than Arrakis/Dune, with practically all native life deadly poisonous: colonists live on eight imported plants eked out with ritual cannibalism (baby paté, anyone?). Their murderous ethos allows killing, culling and breeding-for-meat, but war is unthinkable because you *never* kill more than you can eat.

The labyrinthine plot begins with a twisted Getan courtship: three brothers ordered by their clan to make an unwanted third marriage (the family unit is six) choose to pay court by the Death Rite which is the harshest test of *kalothi* (general fitness-to-survive), and whose repercussions eventually change Geta's whole weird and variegated culture. Convincing biology and sociology make a remarkably successful novel... but venturers into the untamed interior of *Geta* should take a ball of string. Kingsbury throws you in at the deep end, to flounder for several chapters in complex Getan nomenclature, society and thought. Definitely worth it, though.

Jack Vance in *Lyonesse* [*Granada* 436pp £2.95] offers more apparent complexity – screeds of names, glossaries and genealogy of his pre-Arthurian era. But as he observes, you can skip much of that: the story, though many-stranded, is smooth and straightforward. Kings, queens and mages wrangle over lands which have long since dropped into the sea; fairies replace abandoned kids with changelings; various folk go questing this, that and the other. By comparison with most epic fantasy on the market, Vance's effortless prose and colourful descriptions seem outstanding; compared with his own richness and wit in (say) *The Dying Earth, Lyonesse* falls a bit flat. Though it has its moments (the visit to the magic land Irery, cameo appearances of some fine rogues and picaroons, a spell recalling the Total Perspective Vortex in *Hitch-Hiker*, and more), these are diluted by merely adequate passages, as though Vance needs to hoard his strength for this marathon. An amusing epilogue foreshadows sequels: 'Who nets the turbot who swallowed the green pearl? Who proudly wears the pearl in her locket and is compelled to curious excesses of conduct?' Next year, same time, same channel...

Valentine Pontifex by Robert Silverberg [*Gollancz* 347pp £9.95] follows



Lord Valentine's Castle and *Majipoor Chronicles*. Like *Lyonesse* it slips down easily and only disappoints by contrast with certain earlier work. The sinister Metamorphs are spreading ecological nasties to drive us from their native world Majipoor; Lord Valentine is on a ceremonial progress which runs into one appalling discovery after another; his protegé Hissune is being schemed against by jealous lordlings; awesome 'sea-dragons' are aiding the Metamorph plot... rousing stuff, eh? Somehow, though, the baddies crumble too easily, as when the whole Metamorph threat turns out to collapse with the (virtually *deus ex machina*) liquidation of one person, or when the opposition to Hissune is so quickly won over by his niceness that not one rude word is said about Valentine's possible motives in elevating this good-looking commoner lad to the peerage (nudge, nudge, etc).

It's still a rattling good read, and one very effective plot thread remains – the reluctance of Valentine to make way for fresh blood (Hissune) and let himself be booted upstairs as Pontifex, a title which for reasons of state means you have to live in a hole in the ground. What will Valentine's ultimate, cosmic decision be? Readers will remain in any agony of suspense unless they've cheated by reading the book's title. Not many surprises, then; but if you liked the previous two you probably won't be disappointed.

Lies, Inc by Philip K Dick [*Gollancz* 199pp £7.95] I rather expected to find disappointing. In a sense it's Dick's last SF novel, revised shortly before his death in 1982; much of it, however, appeared in 1964/6 as that uninspiring book, *The Unteleported Man*. Despite my misgivings, the huge chunk of new material (roughly pages 74-173) and some sneaky revisions have flipped the novel inside-out – routine political double-dealing gives way to nightmare 'paraworlds', and the almost unchanged ending corkscrews back into this central delirium. New plot elements include echoes of Dick's disquieting 1967 short 'Faith of our Fathers' in *Dangerous Visions*, and of that enigmatic Book in *Galactic Pot-healer* (1969). Maybe it's my own current feverish state, but I'm not sure that *Lies, Inc's* maze of nightmares does in fact make sense in objective plot terms: it's a marvellously hallucinatory experience, though, far better than the original *Unteleported Man*. Must re-read this one, I can see.

Another mild surprise was Sydney J van Scyoc's *Darkchild* [*Penguin* 249pp £1.95], which despite a depressingly routine cover and blurb is pleasant science-fantasy. On one hand, psionic powers so potent and mysterious that they may as well be called sorcery; on the other, 'Darkchild' is a programmed clone being used as an organic surveillance device. His progress towards humanity counterpoints the heroine's path to 'sunwielding' power: after the happy ending comes an epilogue with – again – that heady scent of coming sequels. *Darkchild* succeeds through evocative writing and 'information feed', that unobtrusive trickle of data which, as in the best game scenarios, keeps satisfying your curiosity and at the same time stimulating it with fresh questions concerning the way things are. Makes a welcome change from all those Penguin 'fighting fantasy' books by persons whose names momentarily escape me.

Kurt Vonnegut's *Deadeye Dick* [*Granada* 224pp £1.95] makes it as near-SF by neutron-bombing a US city, but is chiefly a straight tragicomedy of power, responsibility and the awful things we do to each other. The Vonnegut idiom of brief, flip, casual paragraphs lets him sneak through some shrewd blows under the lighthearted camouflage, but though often moving the technique sometimes rings hollow. Vonnegut knows a neutron bomb doesn't really 'kill people and leave houses untouched' – the introduction admits as much – but he can't resist using the facile statement and image in his plot. He must know electric chairs hardly ever killed people 'in a microsecond', too: he'd rather be cool and laid-back than honest, it seems. Read the book. but warily.

Also enjoyed: three collections of shorts, Richard Cowper's *The Tithonian Factor* [6 stories, *Gollancz* £150pp £7.95], R A Lafferty's *Through Elegant Eyes* [15 stories, *Corroboree Press* 238pp; about £15 from importers] and *Thieves' World* ed Robert Asprin [8 stories plus oddments; *Penguin* 221pp £1.95]. The first two are very characteristic of their authors, though not as good as previous collections; the third is a patchy multi-author anthology with the common 'Sanctuary' setting many readers will know through the tie-in games. It's adequate.

Who are the best SF authors? Wolfe, Aldiss, Priest, Dick. Who are the worst? Asimov, Heinlein, Brunner, Hubbard, Fanthorpe. The most pretentious? Brunner, Watson, Delany, Ellison, Donaldson. The most sexist? Heinlein, Norman, Copper, Russ (!), Pournelle. The most obnoxious... maybe I'd better stop here. Such were the results of an SF fan poll at the excellent convention Tynecon II, May 1984.□

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Fire on the Water
Bitter war rages throughout your land as the evil Darklords lay siege to the capital. The King sends you on a desperate quest to retrieve the only power in Magnamund that can save your people – 'Sommerswerd' – the sword of the sun.

THE AUTHORS
To regular readers of White Dwarf, the author/illustrator team of Joe Dever and Gary Chalk needs little introduction. Both are contributing editors to the magazine with their popular 'Tabletop Heroes' miniatures review feature. In 1982, Joe Dever won the Advanced Dungeons and Dragons ® Championships in Baltimore, USA, and he has appeared on TV, radio and in the national press in connection with fantasy role-playing games. Gary Chalk is the inventor of the acclaimed wargame, 'Cry Havoc', and illustrator of the current bestselling fantasy game, 'Talisman'.

- The books are set in Magnamund, an entire world of fantasy adventure, created and developed by the authors to form the rich background of the Lone Wolf series.
- Each book features the superb line drawings of Gary Chalk and comes complete with full-colour game map and action chart.
- These two titles are the first of four Lone Wolf books to be published during 1984; further titles will follow in 1985.

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SPARROW BOOKS AN IMPRINT OF ARROW PUBLICATIONS

THE BELGARIAD

Fantasy Fiction for AD&D
by Peter Ransome

David Edding's series of books, *The Belgariad*, looks set to become a fantasy classic of 1984. Dungeon Masters in particular will enjoy it – not only does it tell you an epic story of sorcery and warfare and a scheme wrought and woven across a dozen lifetimes, but the mythos and background details are developed with such meticulous care that it is almost ready-made as a *D&D* campaign world. The map on this page, for example, is only one of many which feature in the books as Garion and his companions journey the world on their prophesied quest.

The story starts in myth. Thousands of years ago, having created the world, the gods gathered the peoples of the world to them. *Belar* watched over the Alorns, a fierce and hearty race. *Issa* was lord of the chaotic and decadent Nyissans. The bull-god *Chaldon* was worshipped by the lawful, if slow-witted, warrior race called the Arends. *Mara* took the Marags (later to become extinct): *Nedra*, the Tolnedrams; handsome *Torak*, the Angoraks. The oldest God, *Aldur*, was God of no one race – he gathered and taught sorcerers from all over the world.

Then dissension and strife came amongst the gods. Seeking absolute dominion, Torak stole the magical *Orb of Aldur* from his eldest brother and tried to use it to make himself master of the world. When he used the Orb's power to damage the earth itself, however, a burst of energy burnt him terribly. Since then, although maimed, Torak has always sought to repossess the *Orb of Aldur*. Since this time the *Orb* has never been used. In fact, it is simply too powerful an artifact to use in any *D&D* scenario or campaign. A few of the personalities and creatures of the world are given below.

TORAK

Armour Class:	-1
Movement:	30"
Hit Points:	145
Attacks:	2/round for 3-36
Special Defenses:	+3 or better weapon to hit; surrounded by *Ring of Spell-Turning* effect.
Magic Resistance:	80%
Alignment:	Lawful Evil
Fighter:	15th Level
Magic User:	16th Level

Of the seven gods who created the world, only the evil Torak has chosen to remain physically present within it, while the others guide their followers from the Outer Planes. Torak stole the magical *Orb of Aldur* from his brother gods, but when he used its powers to damage the fabric of the world it turned against him, searing him with its fire and maiming him horribly. The *Orb* remains his nemesis – when Torak is near, it responds to his presence, and he will always recoil in fear even though, paradoxically, his greatest desire is to possess it again.

Torak's power is currently dormant since his defeat by the Warden of Riva, Brand, centuries ago. When he awakes, he will contend again for dominion of the world, and that will be the Day of Judgement.

ALGROTHS

No Appearing:	1-8
Armour Class:	8
Movement:	12"
Hit Dice:	2d8
Treasure:	None
Attack:	2 claws for 1d4 each + poison
Alignment:	Neutral
Intelligence:	Low to Average

These predators dwell in the mountains of Ulgo and occasionally range down in search of human prey. They prefer to attack at dusk or by night, for their highly developed senses of smell and hearing allow them to hunt in near total darkness.

In appearance they seem somewhat ape-like, but with goatish heads and bare, scabrous grey skin. Their hands have long talons rather than fingers, and these are coated with a virulent poison. Some believe them to be distantly related to trolls but this remains unsubstantiated.

MUD-MEN

No Appearing:	2-6
Armour Class:	6
Movement:	6"
Hit Dice:	3d8+2
Treasure:	C
Attack:	Fist for 1d6
Alignment:	Chaotic Evil
Intelligence:	Average

When the Serpent Queen of the warped, chaotic evil Nyissans wishes to exercise her wrath against her enemies, she may send a force of mud-men to slay them. Mud-men are unliving entities composed of clay tangled with vines, and dead twigs. As such they are very difficult to slay. However, if a mud-man is struck for 7 or more points in a single blow, this will strike the sapient snake which resides at the heart of the monster and provides its directive intelligence – the mudman will collapse at once.

BELGARATH

17th level MU/druid; AC8; HP59; Align: Lawful Neutral.
Str: 12; Int: 17; Wis: 17; Dex: 13; Con: 13; Cha: 16.
Druidic Spells: 1st – *Animal friendship x2, faerie fire x2, pass without trace, purify water, speak with animals, detect magic.*
2nd – *Charm person or mammal x2, create water, cure light wounds, heat metal, trip.*
3rd – *Call lightning. cure disease, hold animal, neutralize poison, pyrotechnics, snare, tree.*
4th – *Animal summoning I, call woodland beings, cure serious wounds x2, dispel magic, produce fire.*
5th – *Animal summoning IIx2, commune with nature, control winds, rock to mud.*
6th – *Animal summoning III, cure critical wounds, transport via plants, weather summoning.*
7th – *Control weather, creeping doom, reincarnate.*
Magic User Spells: 1st – *Push, shield, shocking grasp, sleep, friends.*
2nd – *Forget, invisibility, knock, wizard lock, esp.*
3rd – *Clairvoyance, feign death, fireball, lightning bolt, suggestion.*
4th – *Confusion, fear, fumble, monster summoning II, wizard eye.*
5th – *Bigby's interposing hand, contact other plane, teleport, passwall, hold monster.*
6th – *Control weather, disintegrate, legend lore.*
7th – *Limited wish, mass invisibility, power word stun.*
8th – *Mass charm, Serten's spell immunity.*

Belgarath is a powerful sorcerer who has lived for thousands of years and who studied as pupil of the god Aldur when the latter still dwelt in this world. Belgarath is able to take the form of a great wolf up to three times a day (in contrast with standard druid shape-changing). It was in wolf form that he led the king of the Alorns and his sons to steal back the *Orb of Aldur* from Torak's citadel; the frost of the cold wastes turned his hair grey. Belgarath seems to be a roguish, grizzled, middle-aged man of medium height. He usually passed himself off as an itinerant storyteller called Mister Wolf, but in fact he has many other names. Belgarath prefers to use subtle means to achieve his ends; he will always avoid using magic if he can.

SCENARIO OUTLINES

Here are two scenario outlines for using in the 'Belgariad', set in the area of the map shown.

The Restless Spirit

Many years ago, a climber died on the treacherous north face of Icepeak Mountain, in the district of the Marags in south-eastern Tolnedra. Many adventurers seek treasure in the land of the now extinct Marags, and it is said that in a cave on Icepeak Mountain one may find the fabled *Book of Truth*. The climber's body still hangs from a rock outcropping, perfectly preserved by the

freezing cold, and the characters come across it as they clamber up the mountain in search of the lost cave. Once they have climbed a little further they hear a terrible, keening shriek. At this moment everyone in the party must save vs spells or fall to their doom on the crags below. Since folklore speaks of the terrible Banshee of Icepeak Mountain, anyone who does some research before setting out might think to use earplugs...

Within the cave the characters may have the usual cavern complex adventures. However, the Serpent Queen also has her eyes on the *Book* and has sent a force of mud-men, led by a Nyissan priest to fetch it. They should be encountered either inside the caves, or outside, waiting for the characters to finish the dirty work (they hope!).

If the characters actually succeed in locating the cave they will find that the *Book of Truth* cannot be brought away from it. Anyone reading the *Book* will become permanently and unalterably Neutral in alignment and may emerge from the cave with a new character class – so a 7th level MU might choose to become a 7th level fighter, assuming characteristics allowed this.

As the party descends the slopes, they hear the Banshee's wail far above them. The wail rises to a crescendo, finally setting off an avalanche which buries the cave entrance so that none can ever find the *Book of Truth* again.

Trouble Brewing

The player characters are hired to escort Vorskyn, an old cleric, to a village in eastern Arendia. It seems that a villager there was out felling a tree for firewood when, towards dusk, he espied a white figure walking towards him through the forest. In terror, he hurled a stone which struck the figure on the head. But when he gathered enough courage to go closer he found that it was no leprous undead monster as he had thought, but a pretty little girl of the Ulgos – a race of albinos who live in caves and underground tunnels. She was dead.

It is very important to get a cleric to the village in order to resurrect the little girl. If this is note done, and the Ulgos placated, a very ugly incident could arise.

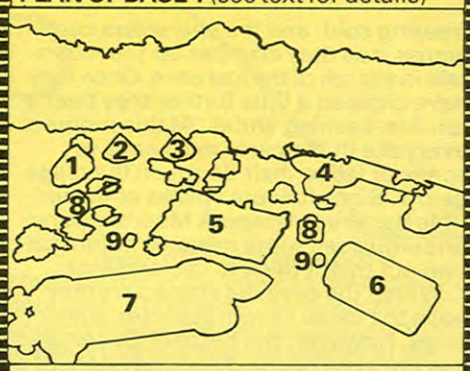
A further complication, if the DM needs it, may arise from the Brothers of Banath, a sect within the priesthood of the god Ul. The Brothers believe that Ulgoland should declare a holy war on all other peoples, since Ul was the only god who did not join in making the world. These dangerous lunatics will attempt to delay the party and/or terminate them (with maximum prejudice). By preventing the little girl's resurrection by these covert means, they hope to stir up hatred for the Arends among the Ulgos, thus furthering their twisted goals. Random encounters, with algroths from the mountain of Ulgoland (or encounters with trained/captured algroths belonging to the brothers) can give some added 'spice'.□

A COMPETITION

Take largest third-from-twenty-one's
(The Pale Ones' matter not),
The four you find will join with lines
that cross upon this spot.

This bizarre piece of doggerel has been sent to us by the crazed priests of the evil god Torak. We are informed by their spokesman, one Konsonant by name, that it contains clues which can lead the leader to a hidden treasure cache! This treasure is somewhere in the kingdoms of the Alorns and Angaraks (see map). The first three Dwarfsters to write and correctly tell us where the treasure is buried will win the treasure itself (the Belgariad books and full colour map).

PLAN OF BASE 1 (see text for details)

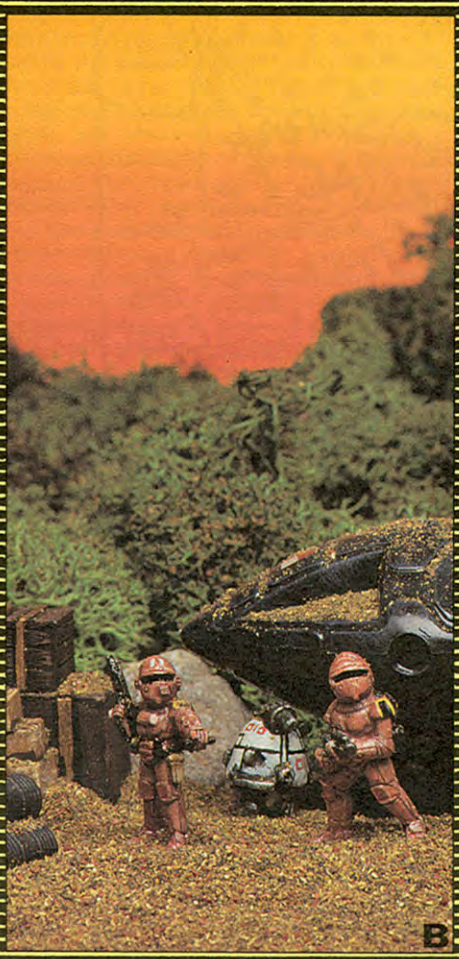


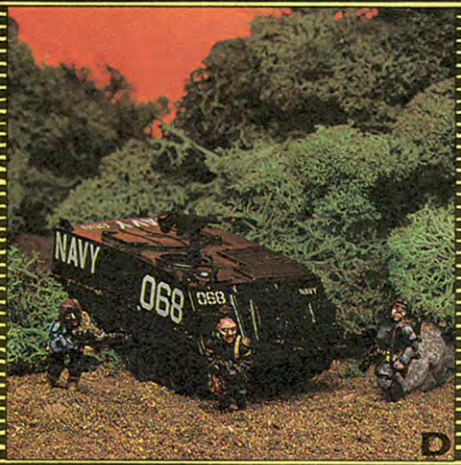
A *Base 1, showing the temple, Spalding's abandoned ship and SS Thatcher's ship's boat.*
B *Talos and security guard inspecting Spalding's abandoned ship.*
C *One of Needham's men hiding behind wrecked service droid whilst security guard covers him.*
D *Zark rebels burst onto the scene.*
E *Gritton, Talos and Needham examining Brand's corpse.*

Photography: Andy Whale and Steve Williams
Figures and Terrain: Tim Hall

THE LAST LOG

A Call of Cthulhu Scenario Set on a Distant Planet Far in the Future by Jon Sutherland, Steve Williams and Tim Hall





GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Although designed for *Call of Cthulhu* this scenario requires little work to adapt to most popular SF RPGs. In our experience, the less the players know about the system or the Lovecraft mythos the more rewarding it is for them. Setting the scenario out of the traditional 20s era shows just how flexible *Call of Cthulhu* can be. This scenario could be used either as an introduction to *CoC* for novice players, or as a basis of a new series for experienced ones. The Keeper should read the entire scenario thoroughly, before starting. The players are the crew on a *Transtec Inc* (an interstellar mining company) freighter (the SS Thatcher), ordered to detour to investigate a nearby planet where a Transtec survey team have lost contact for several months. They travel down to the planet's surface in the Ship's Boat, which also carries an ATP (see Technology).

Time Scale (for Keeper and Players)

2224-Discovery of the planet *Pozalt 7*.
2227-Basic geographical tests carried out. High probability of Mannox (an essential ore for ship drive systems) and other deposits suggested.
2230-Interest shown by Transtec Inc and Zark Investments for mining of *Pozalt 7*.
2235-Homeworld rebellion. Zark Investments fund revolutionary organisation, Transtec backs government.
2237-Rebellion crushed, Zark Investments assets seized and Transtec rewarded with mining concerns (including *Pozalt 7*).
2240-Mining interests of *Pozalt* rekindled after deposits of Mannox dwindle from existing mines.
2241-Advanced survey team lands and establishes initial base on *Pozalt 7*. Planet declared uninhabited although traces of extinct civilisation remains, planet considered viable mining proposition.
2243-12 machine manned sites established. Base one is manned by a small co-ordinating team led by Cpt Spalding.
2244-After many promising reports a period of 7 months pass without any word from the survey team.
2244-Passing Transtec freighter ordered to detour to send an investigative team to establish reasons for the communications breakdown...

THE PLAYERS

(Crew of the Freighter, SS Thatcher)

Talos Berik
AGE: 44
STR: 13; **CON:** 16; **SIZ:** 10; **INT:** 12; **POW:** 14; **DEX:** 15; **CHA:** 14; **EDU:** 7; **SAN:** 40
Hit Points: 13
Skills: First Aid 75%, Listen 80%, Spot Hidden 75%, Track 70%, Mech Repair 55%. Camouflage 70%, Hide 80%; Move Quietly 85%, Fast Talk 50%, Throw 90%.
Weapons: Slug thrower (auto) 2 shots per round, 2d8 damage, 75%, 8BPs; Bowie Knife 90%, 1d6 damage (1 in each boot), 15BPs.
Profile: Security co-ordinator for Transtec Mining Inc, Talos' unique abilities as a scout have been exploited to the full by Transtec. Security is always tight when rival companies compete for new sites. Talos' experience in the field has meant a constant, if unrewarding, supply of security work. During his fifteen years with the company, the ex-marine has become a shrewd judge of character, having met, arrested or totalised villains from every walk of life. Berik has the reputation of being a perfectionist, standing up to anyone who he feels threatens group safety. His clinical approach to the job has gained him immense respect from his colleagues. The trip to *Pozalt 7* is to be his last before planned retirement at the end of the year. Physically Talos remains capable but the responsibilities of work have aged him prematurely. Years of solitude en route to missions have resulted in a tense, easily excitable individual brooding and withdrawn. The mission to *Pozalt 7* represents the final barrier between him and the luxury of retirement; adventure is the last thing Talos needs...

Keeper Only Notes. Talos Berik is suffering from acute paranoia. Once the events begin to unfold, suspicions towards certain players will heighten... Through careful twisting of the actual plotline the Keeper should do his best to construct a reasonable mistrust between Talos and the rest of the characters. Talos' secret should not even be revealed to the player of the character.

Delia Wasp
AGE: 32
STR: 10; **CON:** 13; **SIZ:** 11; **INT:** 17; **POW:** 11; **DEX:** 14; **CHA:** 10; **EDU:** 19
SAN: 80
Hit Points: 10
Skills: Chemistry 65%; First Aid 85%; Computer/Library Use 60%; Diagnose Disease 75%; Psychology 55%.
Weapons: None.
Profile: Medic. In many ways Delia represents the complete opposite of Talos; level headed, somewhat overcautious, preferring to maintain a low profile and unwilling to put herself in any physical danger. Although obviously intimidated by security, Delia will speak out against brash attempts to deal with matters medical. A former mortician with the Transtec Cryogenic Division she remains ever calm with the impersonality expected from a professional. The overall impression is that of a rather morbid individual less approachable than the good natured Cpt Gritton.

Keeper Only Notes. She is likely to be the first to detect Talos' basic instability (using her psychology skills).

Cpt Peter Gritton
AGE: 29
STR: 12; **CON:** 14; **SIZ:** 17; **INT:** 13; **POW:** 13; **DEX:** 16; **CHA:** 11; **EDU:** 11; **SAN:** 58
Hit Points: 16
Skills: First Aid 50%, Listen 60%, Psychology 25%, Spot Hidden 50%, Hide 35%, Move Quietly 70%, Oratory 45%, Pilot Ship's Boat 55%, Drive ATP 40%.
Weapons: Magnum, 2 shots per round, 1d10+2 damage, 55%, 8BPs.
Profile: Gritton is inexperienced, with little active service to his credit. Having been in Transtecs' employ for four years his knowledge is largely theory. His rank has been forced upon him by the lack of experienced personnel aboard the diverted freighter. He makes up for his lack of practical skills with boundless enthusiasm. He is less than decisive and prefers to seek the advice of others. He does, however, display a natural flair for organisation. Gritton appreciates the opportunity given to him and sees it as a chance to prove that he is official material. He knows Talos reputation and will not let him undermine his authority.

Roger Needham
STR: 11; **CON:** 12; **SIZ:** 11; **INT:** 10; **POW:** 12; **DEX:** 13; **CHA:** 12; **EDU:** 10; **SAN:** 55
Hit Points: 12
Skills: Electrical Repair 45%, Mechanical Repair 50%, Operate Heavy Machinery 40%, Pilot Ship's Boat 90%, Drive ATP 70%, Listen 35%, Spot Hidden 50%.
Weapons: Ships standard rifle, 1 shot per round, 2d6+3, 35%, 10BPs.
Profile: Bored back-up pilot, irritated with the routine of day to day life in space. The one volunteer of the party, he is a lively individual, willing to contribute his ideas even when not asked.

Keeper Only Notes. Needham is the most flexible of the four. His role although not central is crucial, being the only all round technician and pilot.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

Security Personnel
Five individuals, use same stats for each.
DEX: 12; **SAN:** 50
Hit Points: 16
Weapons: Machine pistols, 1d10+2 damage, 45%, 9BPs.
Skills: Move Quietly 40%, Spot Hidden 60%, Listen 55%.
Notes: Under direct control of Talos, they trust him and will be reluctant to follow anyone else's orders. They should not act particularly independently and rely on clear (and simple) instructions from Talos (via throat mikes). Security operatives have high-tensile plastic body armour that will absorb 1d10-1 damage from any attack.

Ships Crew
Two individuals, use same stats.
DEX: 11; **SAN:** 40
Hit Points: 12
Weapons: None.
Skills: Ship-handling (general maintenance) 50%.
Notes: Under Needham's command; they are little more than deckhands virtually useless for any non-ship activities.

Zark Rebels
Four individuals, use same stats.
DEX: 16; **SAN:** 25
Hit Points: 15
Weapons: Machine pistols, 1d10+2 damage, 50%, 9BPs.
Skills: Move Quietly 55%, Listen 60%, Spot Hidden 50%, Drive APC 40%.
Notes: They have a Zark ATV (see Technology) at their disposal. They will be very unwilling to stand and fight. If attacked they will return fire only for as long as it takes to effect escape. They are semi-uniformed with characteristic Zark Investments insignia. The ATV will be recognised by Talos as standard rebel design.

The Star Vampire
STR: 30; **CON:** 15; **SIZ:** 30; **INT:** 12; **POW:** 15; **DEX:** 10
Hit Points: 15
Weapons: Talons, 40%, 1d6+2d6. Bite, 80%, Blood drain.
Note: Read section on Star Vampires in rulebook for attack details. SAN loss for sighting, 1d10. Lose 1 SAN even if successful. This hideous servitor is automatically summoned 1d6 hours after any individual breaks the warding created by

the stone circle. It will attempt to rend all those in the area and will only withdraw when the party has either left or been destroyed. It also possesses the ability to use *shrivelling* spells to its POW limit but prefers to rip-up its victims.

Jem Briggs – The Sniper
STR: 12; **CON**:15; **SIZ**: 14; **INT**: 7; **POW**: 9; **DEX**: 16; **CHA**: 5; **EDU**: 6; **SAN**: 0
Hit Points: 15
Weapons: Ships Rifle (6 shots only) 75%, 1 shot per round 2d6+3 damage, 10BPs.
Skills: Listen 70%, Spot Hidden 70%, Move Quietly 65%, Cthulhu Mythos 25%, Kick 30%.
Notes: Briggs is the last remaining survivor of the first expedition. Constantly on the run from both rebels and tribesmen, he has led the life of a scavenger stealing food from the base whenever he can pluck up the courage to do so. Hidden in the rocks he will open fire on the party if they venture too near the temple. Make sure the players have actually broken the warding around the temple *before* he fires! He knows its danger, and has seen the monsters (his SAN proves this!). If all else fails or he runs out of ammunition Briggs will run directly towards the temple in an attempt to stop the accidental summoning, screaming and gesticulating madly. He is long past caring about being rescued. If he is captured alive, at first he is just a gibbering wreck and is unable to make himself understood in any way. After a while and under sedation, Briggs will quieten down and begin a delirious, but coherent babbling, describing the summoning of the Vampire at Base 10, the nomads of Dan-A-Thos and their outrage at the 'desecration' of Base 1 and the danger of the Temple (see Keepers explanation of the destruction of Spalding's party).

CAMP OVERVIEW (see plan of Base 1)
Landing close to the camp, the party's first impression will be that it appears deserted and overgrown, with no sign of life. The campsite covers an area below a rocky escarpment flanked to one side by a ships boat and to the other by a ruined structure (see photo). Various chairs, tables and survey equipment lay in ordered piles, three tents and a laboratory pod are the main features. The whole area is shrouded in an eerie silence. The air is still and the site is tinged by green lichen which seems to be growing on all exposed surfaces. As the dust whipped up by the ship settles, the onboard computer registers a breathable if somewhat rarified atmosphere with no significant levels of toxicity.

1. Large Tent
The contents are seemingly untouched – a few empty food cannisters are scattered about the floor. Cooking equipment is set up to the rear with rough communal seating around a collapsable table. Just inside the tent flaps is a desk and chair from the ship's pod on which is strewn various charts, logs, text books, and the medical aid kit.
Information Points: A. Food cannisters. They appear to have been opened recently. Contents analysis will reveal that decomposition is only about 3 weeks old.
B. Medical Kit. The box is open and the contents are in disorder; those with knowledge of first aid will note that the sedative and painkilling drugs are missing as is the drip feed and stand.
C. The Duty Rosta. This is on the table just inside the entrance and details group activities, shifts and works schedules. The Team personnel are:

Hannah Ross – Technical Assistant
Steve Cohen – Technical Assistant
Frank Brand – Security Supervisor
Jem Briggs – Security Officer
Marsh Gascoigne – Pilot and Engineer
Briggs' name has been omitted from the last three day entries, and that Brand is noted as sick.

2. Tent
Tent flaps are wide open revealing rough living quarters. Clothes, beer cans and personal effects litter the floor of the tent. There are two camp beds, on one of which lies the wasted body of Frank Brand. An intravenous drip hangs from his right forearm and dangles down to the ground. A broken plasma bottle and stand lie close to the bed. (SAN check, 1d6 loss if failed.)
Information Points: A. The body of Brand is strapped to the bed, both hands and legs are bound to the bed frame.
B. The initial cause of death appears to have been blood loss. A closer examination will reveal a large gouge along the right side of the torso with considerable lacerations. The bed has few traces of blood. Neither has the ground.
C. Chemical analysis will show that the contents of the bottle was a strong sedative (from the medical kit).
D. Tags on the clothing show that this tent housed both Brand and Briggs.

3. Tent
Part of the rigid steel frame is buckled. Slumped against a support bar is a body with its head resting on its knees (SAN check, 1d6 SAN loss if failed). Contents are two portable beds with personal clothing and effects, there are maps, technical equipment, journals and texts of a mining nature.
Information Points: A. The body is Steve Cohen (name tag on his jacket).
B. Cohens' jaw bone and shoulder blades are shattered, fractured and displaced. The neck is broken and the clothing is badly torn.
C. Some of the vertabrae of the back are shattered – showing that the body was thrown against the metal support pillar, with considerable force.
D. A pool of dried blood is around the corpse, and the fabric of the tent around the entrance is splattered with blood.
E. The tent appears to have been inhabitated by the technicians Cohen and Ross.

4. The Ship's Boat
The ship is of an identical design to the landing partys'. Parked precariously all but 10 yards from the cliff face, an external examination of the ship will reveal that the front right hand landing foot is badly buckled. Vegetation and dirt partially cover the ships surface.
Information Points: A. A successful listening roll will detect that faint humming noises emanate from the ship, suggesting that it is still powered.
B. The rear cabin door is shut tight and opens only if the emergency release is activated.
C. Once opened, the rear cabin area is exposed revealing a huddled body (SAN check, 1d6 loss if failed).
D. Closer examination shows that it is the body of Hannah Ross, one of the teams technical assistants.
E. Clutched in the left hand of the corpse is a bottle of capsules. The body is unmarked and the cause of death appears to have been a massive overdose of painkillers.
F. To characters with Pilot abilities it will be obvious that an abortive launch attempt had been made.
G. Primary ignition switches are on and control systems disarray. Warning lights indicate landing gear malfunction.
H. A primitive radar sweep system has been hastily installed and is operational and registering the presence of both landing party and their ship. The hailing tannoy is turned on (much to the alarm of those outside!).
I. The armoury locker has been unsuccessfully forced, upon opening it (can be forced easily by two of the party) one rifle niche is empty.
Overview: The ship is fully operational requiring at least two days work with welding equipment to realign the buckled foot.

5. Temple
Constructed of rough hewed stone and with paved flooring, its low walls have been reduced through the ages. An altar-like structure stands at its centre made of a dense smooth material, cold to the touch. Two tables have been erected on the site, various artifacts lie upon them, some in plastic bags. Hand tools are strewn around.
Information Points: A. A successful spot hidden throw at -20% around the temple will detect a circle of regularly placed black stones. As characters enter the area a breeze (chill) will pick up across the campsite.
B. Artifacts scattered on the table consist of numerous utensils, containers and bone carvings. (The players should be discouraged from too deep an analysis of these artifacts – merely being remnants of an ancient and unknown civilisation.) The books on the table are amateurish drawings of both temple and artifacts. There is a black stone placed on the table which is identical to those surrounding the temple area – they are distinctly alien and of a completely different structure to the temple's material. Closer examination will reveal that the runes carved on the black stone are both crude and recent (a few months old).
C. The altar is about chest height from the floor; it is approximately 8' long, with grooves running down its edges some 2" deep; a collection channel is cut into one corner. There is little vegetation visible around the site.
D. The whole structure is of a solid and sophisticated construction which has borne well the ravages of time.

6. Ship's Pod
Standard Transtec laboratory pod. It is awkwardly balanced upon a rocky outcrop. Despite the pod's legendary sturdiness its bottom right hand corner has been crumpled inwards. Only one of its four doors appears open and it is only accessible by climbing the rocks and lowering oneself down into the entrance.

Information Points: A. Deep impressions in the soft soil surround the pod. They are angular in appearance, starting some 20 yards from the pod's present position.
B. The three closed doors emergency access buttons fail to respond emitting only a hiss, indicating that they *are* functional.
C. The outer surface of the pod is scarred with score marks. Gouges around both door and underside are of an irregular and indefinable nature. There are traces of carbon in small round indentations peppering the pod's surface.
D. Closer examination of the doors will reveal the fact that they have been welded shut, from the inside...
E. On looking through the pod entrance one can dimly see that the jumbled contents of the lab lie to the far end of the pod.
F. When illuminated, players will see a mass of smashed furniture and equipment; scattered papers and clothing partially cover two legs which protrude from the pile.
G. Exposing the body will reveal the headless corpse of Cpt Spalding (SAN check, 1d8 loss if failed).
H. Items of interest in the pod are some welding gear and cannisters. No weapons of any description are visible.
I. The body's head appears to have been literally torn off, there is no sign of it in the pod.
J. In Spaldings jacket pocket is a black log book. This is the personal mission log of Spalding and details in note form the group's activities since November 25th 2243, dated Day 1. The entries are in the style of a detached professional-brief and emotionless. The notebook is more a scientific log than a personal diary, obviously unofficial.

Day 72. *...malfunction of survey droids at Base 10, running routine checks to establish faults.*

Day 77. am-*security officers Brand and Briggs sent to establish nature of fault and possible repair.*

Day 80. am-*after absence of a day without communication Brand returns alone in a state of shock, claiming that Briggs attempted to murder him... Brand sedated and stable. pm-...Brand's continual ravings unnerving the team, I am concerned for Briggs' safety; am considering contacting Transtec for back-up and Brand's evacuation and replacement.*

Day 81. *I had to rebuke Ross this morning for wasting company time with alien artifacts, (a circle of black stones she hadn't noticed before) and have been forced to put temple out of bounds, team is stretched with two personnel absent from work rota... still no sign of Briggs. I wonder if he'll return.*

Day 82. *Bases 10, 9, 6 all non-operative. Considering shutting down all subsidiary bases and concentrating efforts here... forced to sedate Brand due to his demoralising effect on the team.*

Day 83. am-talked to Brand this morning... no charge (hand writing worsens)... pm-we have been under attack for three hours now... must assume that rest of party dead... no food... no weapons... have taken all precautions I can... can only hope now... (final entry scrawled and unreadable).

7. Player's Ship
See the Technology paragraph below.

8. The piles of equipment are all standard mining survey gear. Drill bits, sampling rods, explosives and detonators, some of which are open.

9. Service Droids.
Stand inactive around the camp; successful electronic analysis will show that the batteries are dead and they are in a considerable state of despair.

Keeper's Guide to Running the Scenario
The Keeper must always bear in mind that the mission has a series of objectives:
1. Contact Spalding's Group.
2. Establish the nature of the communications breakdown.
3. If necessary pick up survivors.
4. Re-establish communications and secure base and Transtec property.

Within the confines of the mission objectives players should be free to draw their own conclusions as to the base's fate. It should be noted that they should play within the framework given in the player character profiles. Some of the most important aspects of the scenario deal with the deterioration of Talos and the worsening working relationship with the rest of the group. Gritton will have to cope with both the mission and the inevitable clash of personalities.

THE EVENTS
The pace of the scenario will gradually build as clues to the disaster emerge. Once the warding circle around the temple is broken (simply by crossing it) the summoning of the Star Vampire will begin. Briggs' attempt to stop the party from breaking the warding should be flexible and used to speed up the pace if the party have been wasting too much time or are beginning to stray off the track. Soon after the sniper's appearance the Zark rebels ATV will be picked up on the radar making straight for the base camp. They will arrive in 3 minutes time. If the radar is not manned then give the characters 30 seconds to react before the ATV bursts onto the scene without stopping. The rebels will make an attempt to warn the party. If fired on, they will simply drive through the camp and disappear into the distance at high speed. The Star Vampire is following closely; the rebels are simply attempting to put someone else between them and it, consequently they will ignore attempts at further communication, and just try to get 'the hell out'.

When the Star Vampire arrives at the base, its mode of attack will be to attack anyone visible in the open. If beaten back by any firearms it will cast a *shrivelling* spell on the closest victim. Wise players will not stand and fight but will attempt to outwit the creature or try to escape. Note: there are explosives and detonators in the base camp.

THE DESTRUCTION OF SPALDING'S PARTY (Keeper Only)
The initial survey teams had been correct in that an ancient civilisation had once inhabitated the planet, but they failed to identify evidence that remnants still roamed the planet. The Dan-A-thos cult fanatically worships strange alien gods and have dedicated their nomadic existence to the preservation of their sacred shrines, patrolling the planet's surface and offering sacrifice at the sites.

Prior to Spalding's arrival some survivors of the defeated Zark Investments backed rebels had encamped. Unable to eke out an existence on this barren planet their numbers have dwindled. Uncertain of Transtec response to their presence they decided to avoid contact with Spalding's group. The events leading up to Base 1's destruction are much as Spalding described them in his personal log. The reason for Briggs' disappearance and Brand's loss of sanity was the witnessing of the tribe's ritual summoning of its god at Base 10 while they were checking the droid malfunction. Brand found his way back whilst Briggs hid terrified in the highlands. The tribe, in an attempt to track the two men, followed Brand's trail past Bases 9 and 6 destroying them as they went, then followed Brand back to Base 1 and at night placed a warding around the temple. Once broken their guardian was summoned to the site of violation, where it tore through the camp. After butchering Brand in his bed, and slaughtering Cohen as he awoke. The others ran for safety; Ross to the ship, Spalding to the pod and Gascoigne to the open country never to be seen or heard of again.

Spalding, without weaponry, attempted to seal the pod from the inside by welding the doors closed and escape the beast. After a prolonged assault the creature finally broke into the pod and seized Spalding... Ross was the last to die, locked in the ship with no food, or water. Unable to break into the weapons locker, she constructed a makeshift radar to detect the creature's presence. Constantly aware of its proximity she could no longer stand the pressure and, after an abortive attempt to take off, committed suicide.

TECHNOLOGY
On board the player's Ship's Boat is a small vehicle, an ATP. ATP = All Terrain Platform. Capable of hovering up to 15' above the ground, the ATP is a purpose-built military/civilian craft for rough terrain and short distance travel. Capable of carrying up to three persons, usually used for ferrying delicate technical equipment, it has no armament, although military variants carry both ground-to-air and air-to-air missile launchers. Targets in the vehicle should be fired at when moving at -20% chance to hit, when stationary at -10%. Its body is to all intents and purposes invulnerable to small arms fire, although the control panel can be easily smashed.

ATV = All Terrain Vehicle. Many variants of this vehicle are available – the Zark Investments rebels version is of standard civilian type. Used for many tasks from VIP security to heavy duty haulage work. It has room for 4 crew, and has a top speed of 70mph.

On board the players' Ship's Boat: Standard on board computer; weapons locker with 6 ships rifles (as per Jem Briggs), medical kit with emergency drugs etc; basic sick bay (sleeps 6); emergency provisions for 3 weeks for 6 people; water purifier and 1 vacc suit.

The player characters could make a makeshift radar on board their own ship by making 3 electrical/mechanical skill rolls at 30 minute intervals. Pulling out the old radar and transplanting it to their ship, will take 45 minutes but will leave them without radar coverage for that time.□

THE BELGARIAD

By DAVID EDDINGS

IN CORGI PAPERBACK

25th MAY

Book Four to be published September 21st 1984

A MAGNIFICENT FIVE VOLUME EPIC OF IMMENSE SCOPE SET AGAINST A HISTORY OF SEVEN THOUSAND YEARS OF THE STRUGGLES OF GODS AND KINGS AND MEN – OF STRANGE LANDS AND EVENTS – OF FATE AND A PROPHECY THAT MUST BE FULFILLED!

"They're *good*! In fact, they're fabulous. More! More! More!"
ANNE McCAFFREY

RuneRites *is a regular column devoted to* RuneQuest, *edited by Dave Morris.*

Mortal Combat

Rules alterations, additions and clarifications

I have received quite a number of suggestions of ways to improve the combat rules. Everyone has their own view on the proper balance between realism and speed-of-play, so the suggestions here are offered for individual Referees to modify or disregard as they please.

Fatigue

Stamina has a very significant effect on any real-life fight that goes on for more than a few minutes. Not wishing to use 'fatigue points' (they require too much book-keeping as well as allowing unrealistically precise combat predictions), I have opted for a percentage chance of *fatiguing* or *defatiguing* (jargon for 'recovering') at the end of each round. After the first ten MR, every character is liable to *fatigue*. Any character who attacked in melee and/or ran during a round must roll d100 to see if he *fatigues*. Any character who made no melee attack and moved no more than 2m gets a *defatigue* roll.

State	*Effects (cumulative)*
Normal	
10% ↑ ↓ 10%	
Flagging	-5% Attack
10% ↑ ↓ 5%	
Winded	-5% Attack and Parry
5% ↑ ↓ 5%	
Puffed Out	-5% Attack, Parry and Defence
5% ↑ ↓ 10%	
Exhausted	-10% Attack, -5% Parry, halve movement
5% ↑ ↓ 5%	
Finished	*Halve* remaining Attack/Parry and Defence

The percentages shown are the chance that the character will *fatigue* (arrows down) or *defatigue* (arrows up). These percentages are modified as follows:

	Fatiguing	*Defatiguing*
CON below 9	+1%/point	-2%/point
CON above 12	-1%/point	+1%/point
Encumbrance:		
More than full ENC	+2%/point	
Less than 75% ENC	-1%/point	
Wounds:		
Down to ⅓ normal HP	+4%	-6%
Down to ⅔ normal HP	+2%	-4%
Demoralized	+1%	-2%
Fanatical	-3%	

Regardless of modifiers, there will always be at least a 1% chance of *fatiguing* and *defatiguing*.

Experience Increase Rolls
by Lewis Jardine

I am sure that every Referee has found that player characters tend to use their favourite weapon until they qualify for an increase roll at the end of the adventure, then switch weapons in order to get another increase roll.

A character can get any number of 'stars' (ie, eligibilities for an increase roll) during an adventure, but each 'star' gives the potential for only a 1% increase in the skill concerned. (So if Olav gets three successful Fast Talk rolls during an adventure, he will attempt three increase rolls afterwards; if all the increase rolls succeed, his Fast Talk ability goes up by 3%.) The *maximum possible* increase that can be gained from a single adventure is equal to half the character's INT if the skill is below 75%, or one-quarter INT if the skill is 75% or more, rounding fractions up.

This system means that a skill percentage might be any number, as opposed to the current *RQ* system where skills are always multiples of 5%. To interface his system with the rest of the *RQ* rules, Lewis rounds any skill percentage down to the nearest multiple of 5% for the purposes of determining training costs and the chance of impales, criticals, etc.

This system will result in a much slower increase in little-used skills (realistically) and will mean that characters trying to become Rune Lords will have to train quite a bit in the non-weapon skills required for the job. Players should still find it quite possible to make it to Rune level but perhaps not at quite the same hectic rate that some people manage at the moment!

Weapon Lengths
by John Boam

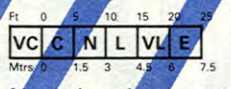
Do you ever have fights where one character uses a dagger and the other uses a pike? In the real world, the man with the dagger would be long dead before he got within striking distance of the pikeman. But what if he sneaked up close and jumped the pikeman? Wouldn't the pike be useless at such a close range? Not in *RuneQuest* it isn't; both attack and parry with normal chances, and each with the same number of attacks.'

One solution is to establish ideal ranges at which a weapon can be used. Any weapon used at a range other than its ideal incurs penalties:

Weapon length SR	VC	C	N	L	VL	E
	Range					
4	0/0	-20/-20	X/-20	X/-20	X/-20	X/-20
3	-20/-20	0/0	-20/-20	X/-20	X/-20	X/-20
2	X/X	-20/-20	0/0	-20/-20	X/-20	X/-20
1	X/X	X/X	-20/-20	0/0	-20/-20	X/-20
0	X/X	X/X	X/X	-20/-20	0/0	-20/-20

The numbers shown are the Attack/Parry penalties, so 0/0 means the character has his normal chance with the weapon.
X/X means no Attack/Parry is possible with the weapon at that range.

The ranges are:
VC – Very Close (grappling, etc)
C – Close
N – Normal
L – Long
VL – Very Long
E – Extreme



Note that these ranges do not represent the actual arm or weapon length, but rather the distance required to use the weapon freely in combat. Shields come under the same range penalties as weapons; this does not represent the space required to use them, but their effectiveness against different lengths of weapon. Small shields should be treated as comparable to an SR4 weapon for this purpose (ie they use the top row of the table above), medium shields count as SR3; large shields, SR2.

Once this range modifier table is used, the ranges between character obviously becomes quite important. This can either be determined from figures positions (in which case *Dungeon Floor Plans* will be useful), or more abstractly by moving characters' counters on a range chart. In any round, meleeing characters have certain options:

Close – this is an attempt to move closer to your opponent.
Standoff – standing off is an attempt to move away from your opponent without leaving yourself open to attack.
Oppose – opposing a close or standoff manoeuvre can be done only if your weapon is within range of the character (eg with a dagger you cannot oppose a character closing on you from Extreme to Very Long range).

A character who is not opposed can move as per normal movement rules. A character who is opposed can:

1. Roll his Defence and move 1.5m closer or further away. No parry.
2. Give up his attack and Jump or Tumble 1.5m either way.
3. Give up his attack and parry, and Jump or Tumble 3m either way.
4. Parry a failed attack and move 1.5m either way.
5. Make a critical parry and move 1.5m either way.
6. Move 1.5m either way if the opposing character fumbles.

These are cumulative; so if, for example, you critically parry a fumbled attack, you can automatically move 4.5m either way.

The range scale is designed for man-sized creatures. In the case of an 18' troll using weapons thrice normal size, the range scale would be expanded:

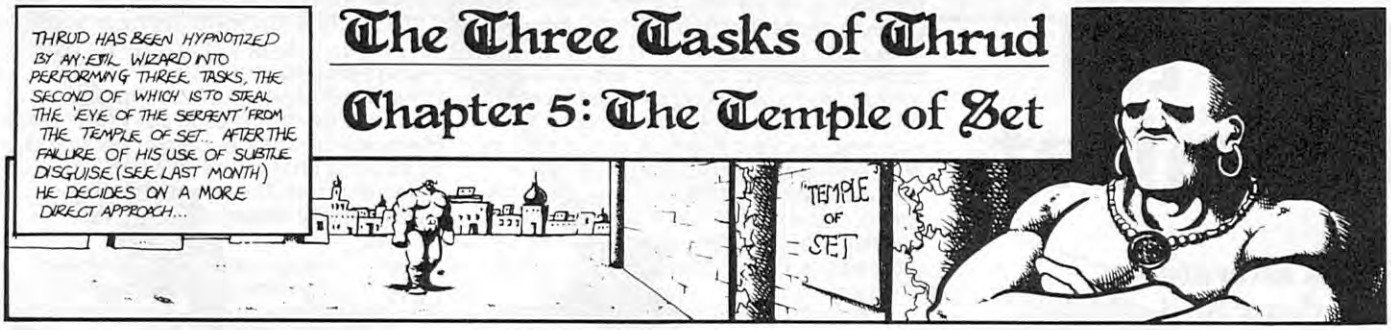
If the troll in question were using a broadsword it would be able to attack (and try to oppose) the human closing on it when the latter was still 18m (60 feet) away. But if the human gets close enough to hit with his own weapon he will get the advantage (the man's E,VL and L ranges correspond to C for the troll, while his Normal and Closer ranges correspond to the troll's Very Close range at which point it cannot use its sword at all).

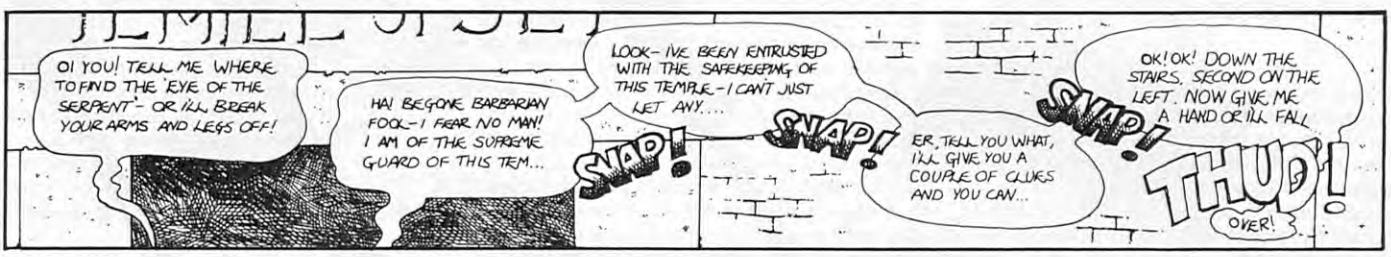
(My only objection to John's system is that the -20% penalties may prove rather overwhelming. Referees running campaigns where characters tend to have skills in the region of 50% or lower might try reducing all the Attack/Parry penalties by half –DM).□

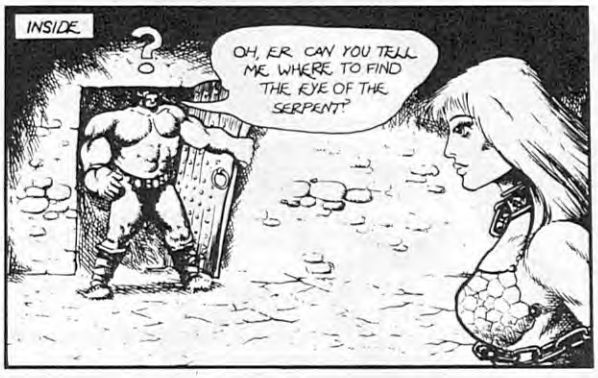
THRUD THE BARBARIAN

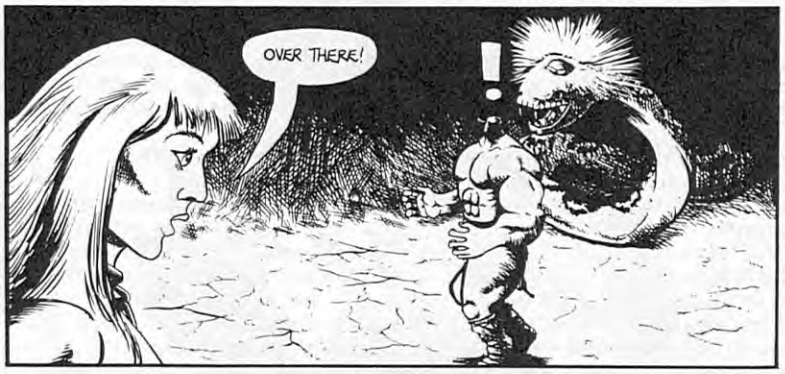
The Three Tasks of Thrud

Chapter 5: The Temple of Set









This AD&D *scenario is the winner of* White Dwarf's *scenario competition. It will be presented in two parts and is intended for about seven characters of levels 1-3, of good or neutral alignment, preferably lawful.*

THE SUNFIRE'S HEART

Part I: Erresea Island by P G Emery

PLAYER'S INTRODUCTION

The Guild of Sages at Basil Port owns Erresea, one of a group of 70 or 80 cold volcanic islands known as the Aurassic Islands. It is of no real use to the Guild but is leased out to anyone interested for the annual sum of 1,000gps.

The current leasees are two foreigners known only as the Dark Leopard and Lord Silver (who is an albino). They have always paid the rent punctually, all transactions having been made through Telfior, an honest elvish merchantman. Telfior is one of the few sailors prepared to supply the distant islands, and the gold payments are ferried across to the mainland in his ship, the *Tyger's Eye*.

The latest payment, however, was due over six months ago. Telfior is untraceable, and so Phalco Linns, the sage in charge of the Guild's lands has tried in vain to find another merchantman willing to collect the rent but Erresea is too far off major trade routes for other merchants to consider the journey. In desperation, hearing of the party's fame, Linns has summoned them to the Guild to ask them to find the Dark Leopard and Lord Silver and demand the rent from them.

The reward is 100gp per man, payable on completion of the adventure. Phalco will pay for information as to the leasees activities – he suspects them of having discovered some unknown mineral wealth and of quietly exploiting it, in which case he would raise the rent. Phalco will also pay for any historical knowledge about the island – if only to complete the Guild's records.

Phalco also issues the party with a warrant to reinforce their authority and a sketch map of Erresea. (This map does not show the nearby islands of Rammas or Hennessar.) The only settlement marked on the map is Miraer, which is where Linns advises the players to head for initially. He says it is a small fishing village of around 200 people, and the best inn is the *Hole in the Ground*.

Phalco gives the party a 40' sailing boat (hull points = 20), provisioned for four months. He can also provide a couple of sailors if necessary.

The party knows little of the Aurassic Islands other than that they were once part of the Solarian Empire. With the decay of the Empire, the islands have become disunited and the population has grown sparse – the few remaining mainly export wool, metals and pumice stone.

DM'S INTRODUCTION

The fate of the two missing rent-payers is merely a part of much greater events, closely concerned with the legends and history of the Solarian Empire.

History of the Solarian Empire (DM only)

The Aurassic Islands were once a healthy, thriving part of the Solarian Empire, trading in valuable minerals, and hardy livestock. In the early years of the Empire, contact was made with the people of the Black Islands, the location of which has yet to be pin-pointed exactly. These people served a demon-like female, known as Asustren to the Solarians. The strength of the Solarian Empire lay in a potent artifact – *The Sunfire's Heart* – although its powers were rarely invoked due to the fear with which it was regarded. Five wars were fought against the Black Islands, the last ending in a crushing defeat for the Solarians in 1175. As a last resort, the Emperor Starnol 'claimed' the full powers of the *Heart*, slaying Ascoln Almeris – High Priest of Asustren – as his first act. Defeating Asustren in combat, Starnol banished her to the Outer Darkness, presumably for ever. The activated *Heart* then turned against the Empire showing itself as a force of Chaos. This unchecked force of chaos angered an extremely lawful group of clerics and magic-users known as the Earthfriends. With the death of Starnol, the Earthfriends declared the Empire at an end and the islands to be run by committee. The *Heart* mysteriously disappeared.

The islands prospered for several more centuries although the Earthfriends dwindled. With this slow decline, so the populace decreased until, with the last of the Earthfriends dying out, the islands were left with only a few scattered settlements.

The dating system, however, still remains as that of the Solarian Empire, with the founding year as 1. The current year by island reckoning is 1702.

The Sunfire's Heart

Its powers should really be determined by the DM to suit his own campaign. However, the wielder of the *Heart* should have his Charisma increased to 22 as a side effect. The *Heart's* powers are inoperative until it has been 'claimed' (qv).

In its stable form, the *Heart* appears as a small, golden sun-shaped orb which is indestructible by normal means [ref *DMG*]. It is a semi-intelligent, highly chaotic force. Concentrated effort on the part of someone sound in mind and body is required to keep the *Heart* in its stable form. Otherwise it manifests itself in different forms, producing weird images, transient illusions and atmospheric effects. Some of these show signs of purpose, but many are totally without reason. Creatures living in the vicinity of the unstable *Heart* may also be affected by its powers. (The Dark Leopard suffered this fate.) The *Heart* may be recalled into its stable form by reading a special spell, but only where the presence of the *Heart* is particularly strong. In its stable form it may also be 'claimed' by use of another spell. Once claimed, it fuses with the claimant for the duration of his life and confers upon him a chaotic alignment. Whilst the claimant can use all the powers of the *Heart*, he will have effectively priced himself out of any campaign. (As an NPC, he will probably go on in an attempt to re-unify the Empire.) The *Heart* itself has no powers outside the Aurassic Islands and the Black Islands. Nonetheless, it is still greatly desired by Asustren. After the demise of Starnol, the Earthfriends decided the *Heart* should be banished to a distant place and kept under close guard. The island of Erresea was chosen for this, and a large community of Earthfriends (clerics and magic-users) were set to guard the *Heart*. They and their descendants were to have no contact with the outside world. For a while, the colony prospered and a great amount of building took place, but eventually they dwindled. The last Earthfriend, Jovian Sturlasson had one heir – a son who was a half-wit and therefore incapable of Guardianship. Increasing age meant Jovian could no longer control the *Heart*, so he sealed it away in a cave in an attempt to restrain its powers. Being wise, he also left clues as to its whereabouts, should the powers be released unrestrained upon the islands. Even so, the *Heart* became unstable and had noticeable effects on the islands of Erresea, Rammas and Hennessar. The chaotic will of the *Heart* sought out Jovian, permeating the very fabric of his house. Realising that he was being assailed, Jovian abandoned the house shortly before the Dark Leopard and Lord Silver arrived on the island. Seeing the house merely as a desirable residence and tiring of Jovian's constant warnings that is was no longer safe, they locked him up in 1682 and he died shortly afterwards.

Asustren (Elishauf)

Outside the Aurassic and Black Islands, this she-demon has no significance, except in her function as Princess of Bugganes (see later) but within the islands, her powers are similar to those of the major demons. Asustren was banished by Starnol though the curse has weakened over the centuries. Even so, she can only appear for brief periods on the *Material Plane* in order to grant her worhippers the higher level clerical spells. For this reason, she must act primarily through her clerics, although her jealousy and suspicion of them usually denies them high levels. Service with Asustren is unrewarding, and her followers usually remain faithful through a perverse nature or by family tradition.

Her true name is Elishauf, and anyone speaking her name has a 5% chance of being snatched away to her plane (usually leaving the poor unfortunate's still smoking shoes behind). Prisoners of Elishauf are subjected to an intensive 12 hour monologue after which they must save against spells or be converted to Elishauf's faith with an alignment shift to CE. Regardless of the success or failure of Elishauf's speech, the prisoner will be returned to the place from which he was taken at the end of this period. Worshippers of Elishauf calling her name when in peril will be deserted as failures and left to their fate.

Asustren/Elishauf's aim is simply to dominate the Aurassic Islands.

DM'S NOTES

Miraer (Map 2)

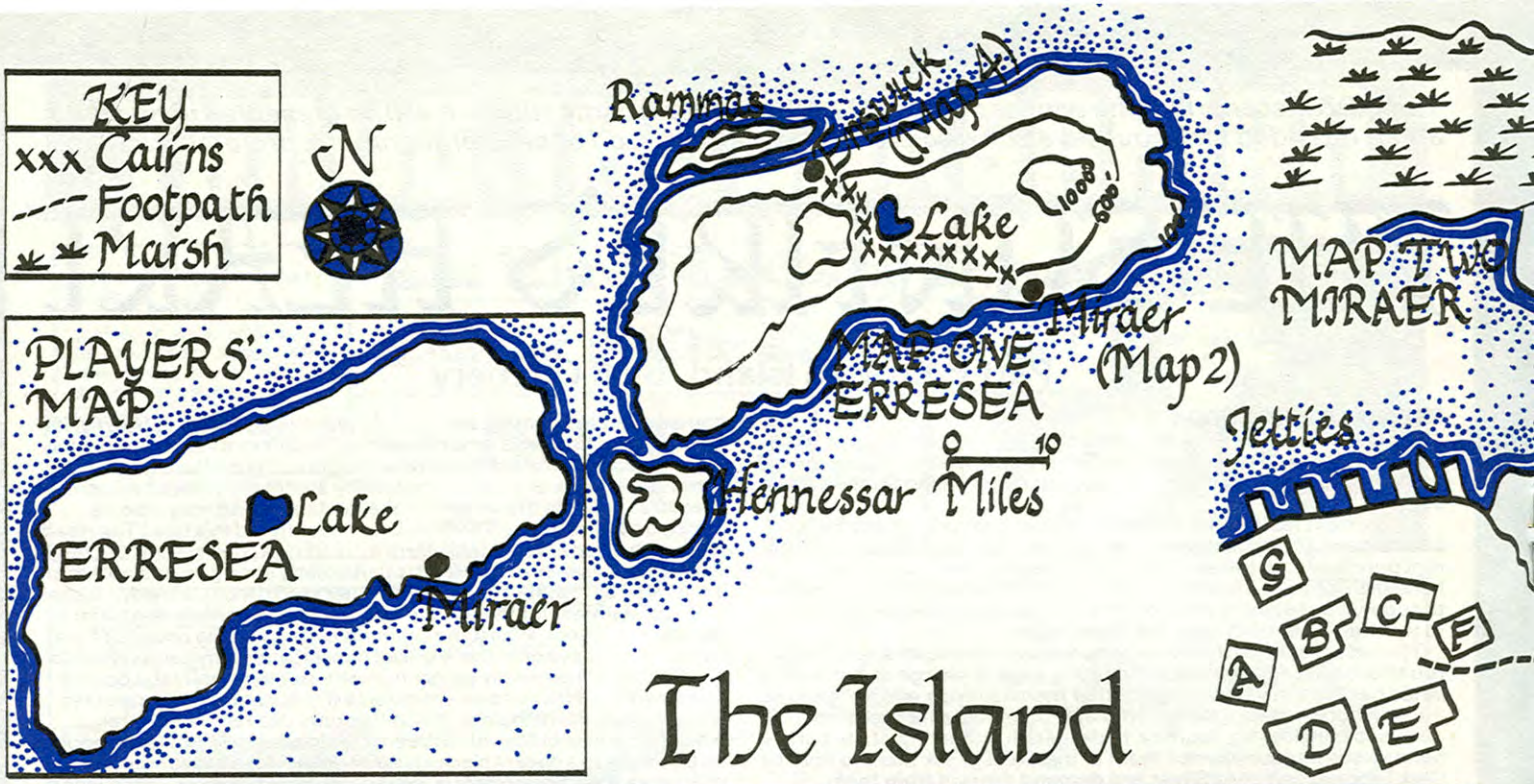
The harbour walls are grown over with grass and moss, and a large marsh has grown around the village. The once large population has shrunk to less than thirty, all of whom are living in a state of poverty.

On some higher ground, stands a crumbling tower – now a mere shell. There is a weathered notice board above a hole in a nearby bank. It reads 'The Hole in the Ground Inn. Prop. Simon Sturlasson'.

A short crawl will lead to an underground chamber, barely high enough to stand in. This is the only room in the inn. The proprietor, Simon, is the half-wit son of Jovian, and is now reduced to an old, cringing wreck.

Simon has no historical knowledge of the island, and if asked the whereabouts of the Dark Leopard and Lord Silver, he will whimper about how 'they took Jovian'. Persevering, the party can learn that they should follow the line of cairns to find the pair.

The rest of the villagers live in similar holes. If the party leave their boat in the vicinity the villagers are 50% likely to raid it, taking the contents and sails before stripping the boat to the waterline for its valuable timber, leaving only its hulk.▷



The Island

General Information
The Erreseans farm a low, narrow, coastal strip of fertile land, behind which the highlands rise steeply. What vegetation there is, is mainly yellowy-green grass which grows in tussocks, broken up by rocky outcrops, and a few hardy conifers. The island's beaches are of black sand, characteristic of volcanic areas.

The Sunfire's Heart has strange effects on the island. The most noticeable is the mists that regularly appear and roll over the island. Strange illusions can also be seen in lonely and isolated spots. Two typical ones are:

A hooded figure, his head and hands covered by his robes, advances towards the party, greeting them by name before walking past them and into the distance. If struck, he vanishes.

During one of the misty periods (or at night), giant footfalls are heard in the gloom, and a mighty voice recites poetry in the distance, typically:

> *'I heard among the solitary hills*
> *Low breathings coming after me, and sounds*
> *of undistinguishable motion, steps*
> *Almost as silent as the turf they trod.'*
> (Wordsworth: The Prelude)

Successfully disbelieving these illusions has no effect.

There are no wandering monsters except in the highlands, where checks are standard (except that no monster of higher than *low* intelligence or 3 hit dice will be encountered).

The Lake (Map 1)
Sheltered by a rocky outcrop near the lakeside is a decrepit wooden building – the Traveller's Rest, a hospice consisting of a single 20' square room. The door is rotten and the building is fragile. The lake is well stocked with fish and is clear-watered. It is also the haunt of a bunyip (*FF*: AC10; HD5; HTK30; Move: 12"; Damage: 1-6; AL: N).

Enswick (Maps 3 and 4)
A small village of about 120 people, living in 35 houses. They support themselves from fishing, sheep-farming, goats and collecting seabirds' eggs. The odd pilot whale helps to supplement their existance. Any luxury items were imported by Telfior on the *Tyger's Eye*. There are a few shops but the villagers mainly rely on barter.

The village is essentially Lawful Good, the people being good-natured and happy to volunteer information without thought of reward. They may even be puzzled and confused by the offer of large bribes. Very few of the villagers have seen magic performed and thus they will be in awe of spell-casters who practice their craft. Riotous behaviour will not be tolerated, but if the characters perform some service to the village, the inhabitants will be delighted. The following information can be gleaned by judicious plying with drinks or polite questioning:

A. The Dark Leopard and Lord Silver became tenants of the island some twenty years ago and have been fair to the inhabitants. They preferred to live on the magical island of Rammas (just visible across the water from the village), and would return to Enswick occasionally to buy various essentials, as well as returning annually to collect a small tax. It is believed that they were undertaking mining operations on Rammas. Lord Silver is a white clad albino, aged about 55, and the Dark Leopard is a short, stocky, dark-haired man clad in leopard skins, who carried a large sword. They were last seen over four months ago.

B. Telfior used to call on the island regularly, but has not been seen in the vicinity for 18 months.

C. Long ago the island of Erresea was inhabited by magical spirits who used to live in the castle above Enswick; although they later moved to the island of Rammas – henceforth taboo to the villagers. They are seen no more, but sleep until the end of the world, deep within the hills of Rammas. (A folk-memory from the Earthfriends).

D. The castle was built by spirits who conjured material from the Plane of the *Seven Heavens* and commanded it to take shape. (Untrue).

E. The castle has become unsafe to visit at night. Strange voices, noises and lights have been reported in the vicinity. (True, but no-one has dared to investigate).

The houses of the inhabitants are mainly of wood. The main buildings of interest are shown on Map 3.

Map 3

A. Armoury. A stone building with a sturdy oak door which has no windows. It contains a few longswords, shields, bows and pieces of leather armour. By law, all men of the village must learn weapon skills, although their need for this is slight. The weaponmaster, Canmuir (AC5; HTK14; LVL3; Fighter) lives nearby.

B. Blacksmith. The smith, Florian (HTK5; LVL0; LG), makes arrowheads and items for boats, but will undertake other commissions at standard rates. He has a large stock of iron, sold to him by Lord Silver. He is usually paid in kind for his services and so only possesses 165cp.

C. Weavers/Tailors. Ralf (HTK6; LVL0; LG; 10gp) sells sailcloth, weaves woollen cloth, buys and sells old clothes and also makes clothes to order (at treble standard prices).

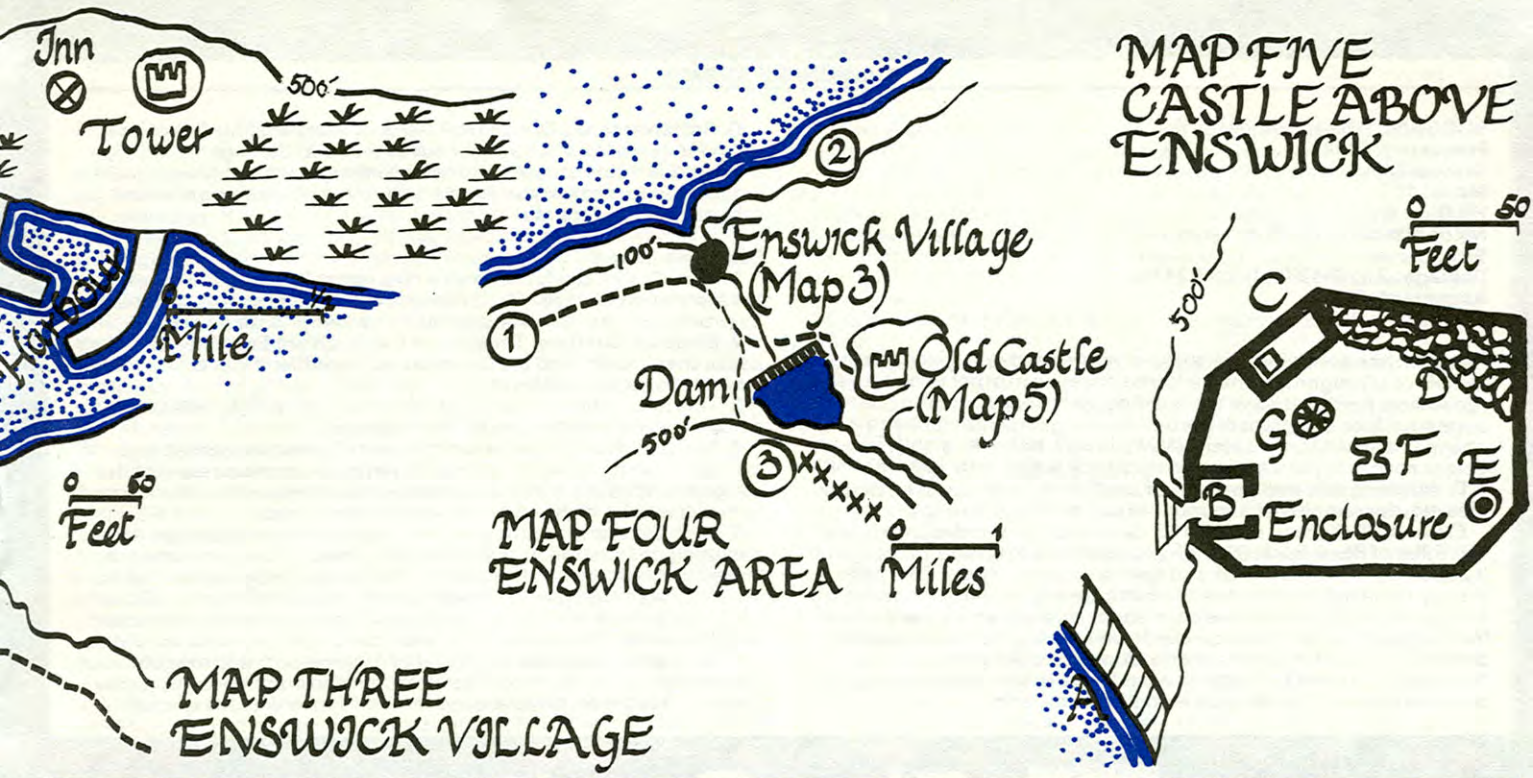
D. The Burrower (Tavern). The bar-room is large and filled with smoke from the peat fire which burns even during the summer months. Frequented by a few fishermen and goatherds, it is also the favourite haunt of the secret followers of Asustren/Elishauf (qv).

Beer costs 2cp, goat's milk 1cp, pot luck consists of either fish stew, goat's meat, mutton, or very occasionally, whale meat, and costs 2cp. There are no rooms to let – enquirers will simply be told to ask Jakobs at the council meeting house for the key to the guest house. The innkeeper is Olaf (HTK4; LVL0; LG).

E. Headman's House. This solid, stone-built edifice also serves as the council meeting hall and is empty except for a large wooden table, benches and a few fancy skins of animals plus assorted heraldry hanging on the wall. The Headman, Jakobs (HTK3; LVL0; LG) presides over the council of five. He can give characters a rough outline of the history of the Aurassic Islands. He will have heard of Asustren, but knows only this name, not her true name. Although he doesn't know how the *Sunfire's Heart* came to Erresea, he knows its place in history and will describe it as 'a wondrous device like a radiant sun'. Otherwise, Jakobs is a corpulent, courteous, good-natured and rather silly man.

F. Guest House. Old tradition means that the villagers of Enswick maintain this building for the use of travellers; even though it has not been slept in for a number of years. The key is obtainable from Jakobs. Guests may stay as long as they like, free of charge, but must sweep out the council's hall each week. The building is of stone construction, 30' long and 15' wide, with a solid wooden door at the western end. It is furnished with eight beds (although there are twenty mattresses stowed in the rafters), a storage cupboard and a table plus benches. The six windows (three on each long side) are all 2 foot square and shuttered.

G. Boatyard. Five wooden jetties shelter the fleet of small open boats used by the fishermen. Gerraint (HTK8; LVL0; LG) acts as 'harbourmaster' and is stationed in the hut by the waterside. He will under-



take small repairs, and also sells essentials such as tar, paint and rope (all at double standard prices due to scarcity). Rowing boats may also be hired out for 1sp per day (plus 1gp deposit).

Stationed at the easternmost jetty is a 30' sailing boat, with a deckhouse (20 hull points). The name *Rediscovery* is painted rather shakily on the prow. The forward and central hatches have been padlocked, as has the deckhouse.

The *Rediscovery* is the ship of the strangers currently lounging in the Burrower. They arrived some two weeks before the party, and go around the village speaking of peace, love and getting back to nature. They dress strangely – wearing white smocks embroidered with flowery designs, coloured headbands and sandals.

They are, in fact, followers of Asustren/Elishauf whose doctrines are contrary to those they preach as imposters. Welandt Brenning (AC10/2; HTK14; LVL3; CE; Cleric; Str: 10; Int: 12; Wis: 13; Con: 10; Dex: 9; Cha: 13) is their leader. Out of his disguise, he appears as a dark-haired, swarthy man with thick, bushy eyebrows. Somewhat half-hearted after 40 years of thankless service to Asustren, he is careful not to show this to his followers. On ship he has a suit of black plate-mail, shield and mace.
Spells: 1st – *Darkness, command, curse*; 2nd – *Hold person*.

Abakur (AC10/2; HTK8; LVL2; CE; Cleric; Str: 9; Int: 11; Wis: 11; Con: 12; Dex: 11; Cha: 10) is a pallid, slightly overweight man, fanatically loyal to Asustren. On ship he has plate mail, a shield and his flail.
Spells: 1st – *Cure light wounds, darkness*.

Vagur (AC10/5; HTK8; LVL1; CE; Cleric; Str: 12; Int: 14; Wis: 12; Con: 14; Dex: 9; Cha: 9) respects Welandt, believing Abakur to be overly zealous, and is a quiet, restrained individual of plain appearance. On ship are his armour (black scale mail), shield and mace.
Spells: 1st – *Command*.

The clerics are backed up by two fighters, Torstein and Goidil, also Asustren devouts. Torstein (AC10/3; HTK14; LVL2; CE; Fighter; Str: 14; Int: 5; Wis: 5; Con: 13; Dex: 13; Cha: 7). Plate mail, 2H-sword, longsword (on ship) is not overly bright, although clever enough to maintain the deception of 'peace-loving'. He obeys Welandt without question and is inclined to brutality. At 6' 11" tall, with a broken nose, square cleft chin and a cutlass scar on his left cheek, he is quite distinctive! Goidel is unremarkable in comparison (AC10/7; HTK6; LVL0; CE; Fighter. Leather armour, sword and shield on ship).

Additionally, Esh Dog (AC7; HTK6; LVL1; CE; Assassin) is at their disposal, although, except for late-night scouting missions, he has not been on the island, prefering to remain hidden on board the *Rediscovery* by day. He is a small, lightly built man; plain but neatly attired. He has a very threatening manner of speech which he uses to intimidate people.

Caged in the boat's hold are a pair of ogrillons (*FF*: AC6; HD2; HTK11, 8; Move: 12"; Damage: 2-7; CE) which the group use when force is required.

When on their more dangerous nightime activities, they wear black armour and face-masks, so it is by no means certain that the 'druids' and the masked villains would be connected. Each wears an amulet in the shape of a flat disc which emanates a strong neutral aura that will fool *know alignment* spells 90% of the time.

The aim of the group is to locate Alman Almeris (descendant of Ascoln), one of the greatest of Asustren's clerics who disappeared over 150 years ago. Asustren has revealed that he is in a magical sleep somewhere on the island. When they have found Alman Almeris, their second task is to find the *Heart*. Asustren would then gain sufficient power to break the curse placed on her, or at the very least be able to rule the Aurassic Islands through the offices of Almeris – the *Heart* revitalising the stagnant Black Islands.

Caution is a distinct Black Islander trait and the group fear slipping into some ancient Earthfriend's trap, giving themselves away to the villagers (who hate the memory of Asustren), or incurring the wrath of Asustren herself. Thus they haven't investigated the old Earthfriend stronghold above the village, nor the island of Rammas, contenting themselves with areas of local interest. As time wears on, the group will feel more compelled to act bravely, and if the players visit some of the stranger areas, the group will not be far behind.

They practice various unsociable acts among the villagers. They delight in writing the name 'Elishauf' around the village in the hope that someone will read it aloud and be snatched by Elishauf. Jakobs, if pressed hard by the players will remember this practice to be that of the long-banished and almost forgotten Asustren...

Asustren's followers will be seriously alarmed by anyone appearing in the village who tend to investigate holes in the ground, old ruins etc (in short, the characters). Their first action will be to pin to the door of the player's accommodation 'Elishauf' on a note. If this fails, they will send Esh Dog to apply pressure, even up to the point of assassinating a character. If all this fails, an all out assault by the two ogrillons and the followers will follow. Should the players actually capture Almeris or the *Heart*, these villains will try anything in desperation to get them back. If they themselves are captured, only Esh Dog and Welandt will actually talk, confessing a great deal if offered some sort of protection from Asustren.

Map 4

1. A pinnacle of black rock. It has no significance.

2. The mastless and deckless remains of a 40', broad-beamed merchantman have been driven hard against the shore. The prow bears the name *Tyger's Eye*, the boat having been wrecked 18 months previously with the loss of all hands. This wrecking is unconnected with events on the island.

3. This is a small guard-post erected by the Earthfriends, but has long been abandoned to the elements. Inside, it is a functional 15' square building.

The Castle (Map 5)

This was the first habitation of the Earthfriends after their arrival on Erresea. About 300 years ago it was converted into a dummy repository for the *Heart* in order to fool enemies and casual treasure hunters. The *Heart* and the greater part of the Earthfriend community moved to nearby Rammas, although the upper levels of the complex were still used as lodgings for low-level Earthfriends. All was well until a bizarre and fatal occurrence put an end to it. The other Earthfriends sealed the dungeon, abandoning it to its fate. 150 years ago, Almeris and a small group of Black Islanders penetrated the dungeon, but none re-emerged.

The outer defences of the castle are ruined and vary between 15 and 20 feet in height. Features of the castles and its surrounds (see Map 5).

A. The Dam. Supplements the meagre fresh water supply of the castle well. The pool so formed is about 15' deep and stocked with fish.

B. Castle Gatehouse. Only the outer walls stand (up to 40').

C. Ruined Chapel. Imparts a feeling of desolation and desecration to a LG cleric on entering. Formerly dedicated to the LG deity of the Earthfriends, the chapel has fallen into extreme disrepair; the marble altar at the western end having become green and slimed. The floor has been churned up badly – as if by the footprints of some giant, hooved creature. Unusually, the prints do not extend beyond the chapel doorway. At night, the temple is haunted by a...▷

BUGGANE (Minor Demon)
Frequency: Rare
Armour Class: 0
Move: 15"
Hit Dice: 8
No of Attacks: 2 (bull) or 1 (ram)
Size: Large
Damage: 2-12/2-12 (bull) or 3-24 (ram)
Alignment: CE
Intelligence: Low

Asustren has dominion over these creatures and may place one in any temple of LG alignment that falls into disrepair in order to discourage rebuilding. It will not leave the building that it is supposed to guard. It appears either as a giant black bull or as a giant black ram and may change between forms as will. (MM p12 bull, p81 ram, giant). This particular specimen, since it is a relative back water, only has eight hit

D. All along this wall are piles of small rocks with decayed timber, tiles etc, the remains of a number of rather flimsy lean-tos.

E. Castle Well. Now a shaft 180' deep and surrounded by a 5' wall.

F. Pillar of Black Rock. 30' high and shaped into an hourglass figure. It appears much weathered and split. It radiates magic. This pillar is the supreme achievement of the Earthfriends: it was intended as an energy focus for the various permanent illusions and other tricks in the dungeon below. Damage due to weathering has lessened the powers of the pillar, and made the dungeon safer since the time Almeris penetrated it. The pillar would have to be smashed to dust and scattered, before it totally ceased to have any effect.

G. Entrance to the Dungeon. A flight of steps leading down. The dungeon tunnels have been cut out of the rock. Ceilings are 12' high and walls are very smooth and level, although unlined. Doors are wooden, unless otherwise stated, and rotten. Wandering monster rolls are not appropriate.

Level One (Map 6)

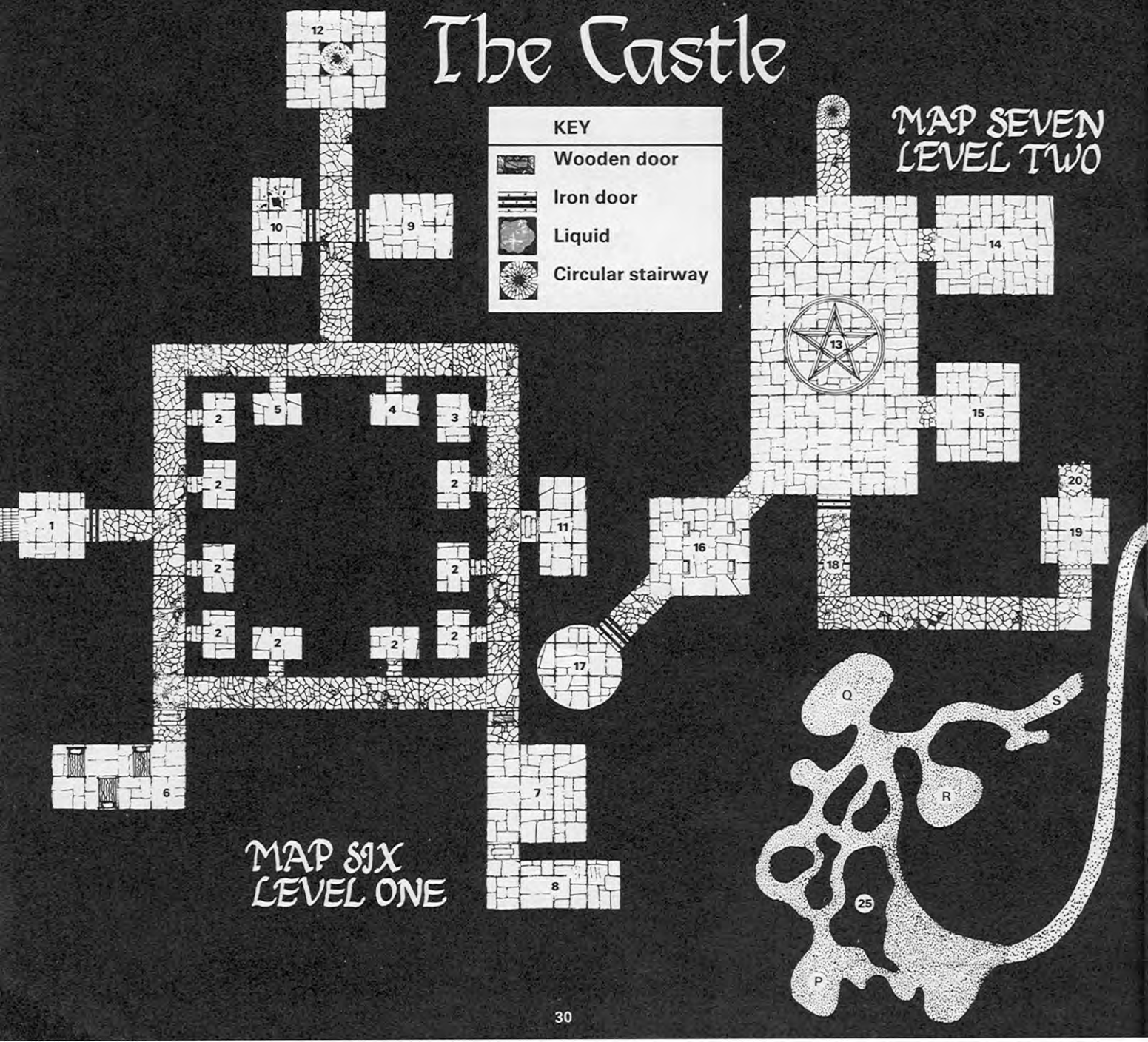
1. Steps Down. Leads to a small empty room. The door is of iron, with the inscription 'Sealed 1501'. The lock has been smashed, obviously by prodigous strength (actually by a member of Almeris' party).

2. Sleeping Quarters. These were the postulant Earthfriends 'cells'. Its bareness testifies to the harshness of their life. It contains a rotted straw pallet, a jug and bowl.

3. This is as 2, but a brown leather book containing a collection of smutty stories is hidden under the mattress.

4. As 2, but this is also the room of one of those concerned in the event (conjuring up Asustren) which led to the abandonment of the dungeon and castle. In the pallet will be found: 5gp, a stick of chalk and a tiny jet amulet in the shape of a woman in armour.

5. As 2, but this is the room of the ringleader, named Swain, in the conjuring of Asustren. It contains a very small metal chest which is locked and hidden in a dark corner. Inside this are 3gp, a lead tablet inscribed with the words, 'I worship thee, beautiful Asustren. Admit me to thy service and spare me my servitude', a piece of parchment with the words, 'Snorri Starost if you read this may you be cursed as a harsh master of postulants and for finding me out', and a parchment of great age, obviously much examined, entitled in common, 'Conjuring Elishauf' but the contents are too arcane for one without special



knowledge of conjuring demons to understand. The shade of Swain, a youngish man in a dark robe, who became tired of the harsh life of the Earthfriends, may appear in the corridor here, but will disappear if spoken to, stared at or touched. The shade has no power or voice.

6. Infirmary. It contains: 3 beds with mattresses, all badly decayed; 3 shelves with glass bottles of herbs, all labelled [*DMG* p220-221], although the herbs have all decayed into powder, and a cupboard full of rusty surgical instruments.

7. Kitchen and Refectory. 4 shelves support about 50 pewter plates, various cooking pots, ladles etc. There are two iron stoves and two long tables with benches.

8. Food Store. Contains numerous decaying barrels and sacks, full of equally decaying food. There is a 1% chance of catching a nasty disease here [see *DMG*].

9. Museum. The door is iron, but not locked. It bears the legend 'Museum'. The collection is hardly impressive, however. The items are displayed on stone pedestals and consist of: 3 wooden model boats, all longships, unlabelled; 1 stone idol, 1½' high at the shoulder, of the old Aurassic Islands Bear deity, Bungol (labelled as such); 3 small metal plates, totally black and reflecting no light, obviously from a scale mail coat, labelled as fragments of the armour of Asustren; 1 frail-looking two-handed sword, labelled as the (alleged) sword of the Emperor Starnol; 1 tin of pink crystals labelled 'Badger Poison'.

No exhibit shows signs of decay (a capricious effect of the pillar).

10. This room also has an iron door, which has been forced. It bears the inscription 'Snorri Starost, Master of the Postulants'. Inside, there is a bed, the mattress of which has been slashed open and searched, a desk and a chair. A large number of parchments lie scattered over the floor: they all relate to trivial matters such as sheep-shearing, accounts, food stocks etc, although one has the words, 'Memo: Swain is up to no good!'. A bottle of ink was also smashed in the floor during the search, also a lantern. 7gp and 3 jewels lie at various points on the floor. The search was conducted by Almeris and his men looking for information.

11. Store. Contains a wide variety of farming implements, eg sheep-shears, bill-hooks, hoes, meat hooks, branding irons etc.

12. This room is bare, merely serving to house the stair-case down to the next level. The rock in a 7' diameter circle on the ceiling has been melted, as if by considerable heat, and so has the rock of the stairs. Five skeletons lie sprawled in the room, victims of the strange events on the level below.

Level Two (Map 7)

On this level 200 years ago, five bored postulants, after study of an old document, attempted to conjure up Asustren/Elishauf. She duly appeared (briefly). Regarding Earthfriends as enemies, she brought with her searing heat and other magics killing all of this level and several on the level above. Stonework on this level was seared and slightly melted and doors were burnt away along with most contents of the rooms.

13. Assembly Hall. This was furnished with tapestries and pictures, but these were burnt away. Torch brackets survive at 15' intervals. Asustren was conjured in this room and strange marks – circles, snakes, human figures, numbers – made in chalk on the floor are still faintly visible. Also on the floor are charred ends of wands, sword hilts etc – magic items destroyed as part of the conjuring.

The five involved in the conjuring are now sooty black marks on the wall (in vague silhouettes). A sixth, intended as a human sacrifice, is now a sooty mark on the floor. Before leaving, Asustren wrote her name 'Elishauf' in glowing green letters a foot tall in the ceiling. They are still there.

14. Old Instruction Room. There are charred remains of benches on the floor.

15. Old Library. Burnt-up remains of books and shelves. Nothing is legible.

16. This room, less scorched than the rest, is where the Earthfriend formerly conducted their experiments into the magical and alchemical suspension of life and the creation of new forms of life.

There are four stone operating slabs 7x1½' and 4 feet high and a metal stretcher, badly melted. The walls were lined with wooden shelves, now burnt. The floor is covered with broken glass and a few surgical instruments.

17. The door to this room is iron, but not locked. The room was little damaged by the coming of Asustren.

18. The metal door to this passage is badly melted, but south of it, the walls are little touched by the conflagration.

19. This room marks the start of that part of the dungeon adapted as a dummy repository for the *Sunfire's Heart*.

The door is made of a heavy purplish metal. Almeris and his men chalked on the door the following dedication in the ceremonial tongue of the Black Islands: 'Mende, mende, mondo Elishaufes' ('Onward, onward, in the name of Elishauf'). Inside, the room is lit by clerical *continual light* (cast at tenth level of ability). Out of the opening in the north wall quite a strong wind blows and whistling and roaring are heard from the depths. (This is to deter the suggestible from further investigation: it has no real significance.)

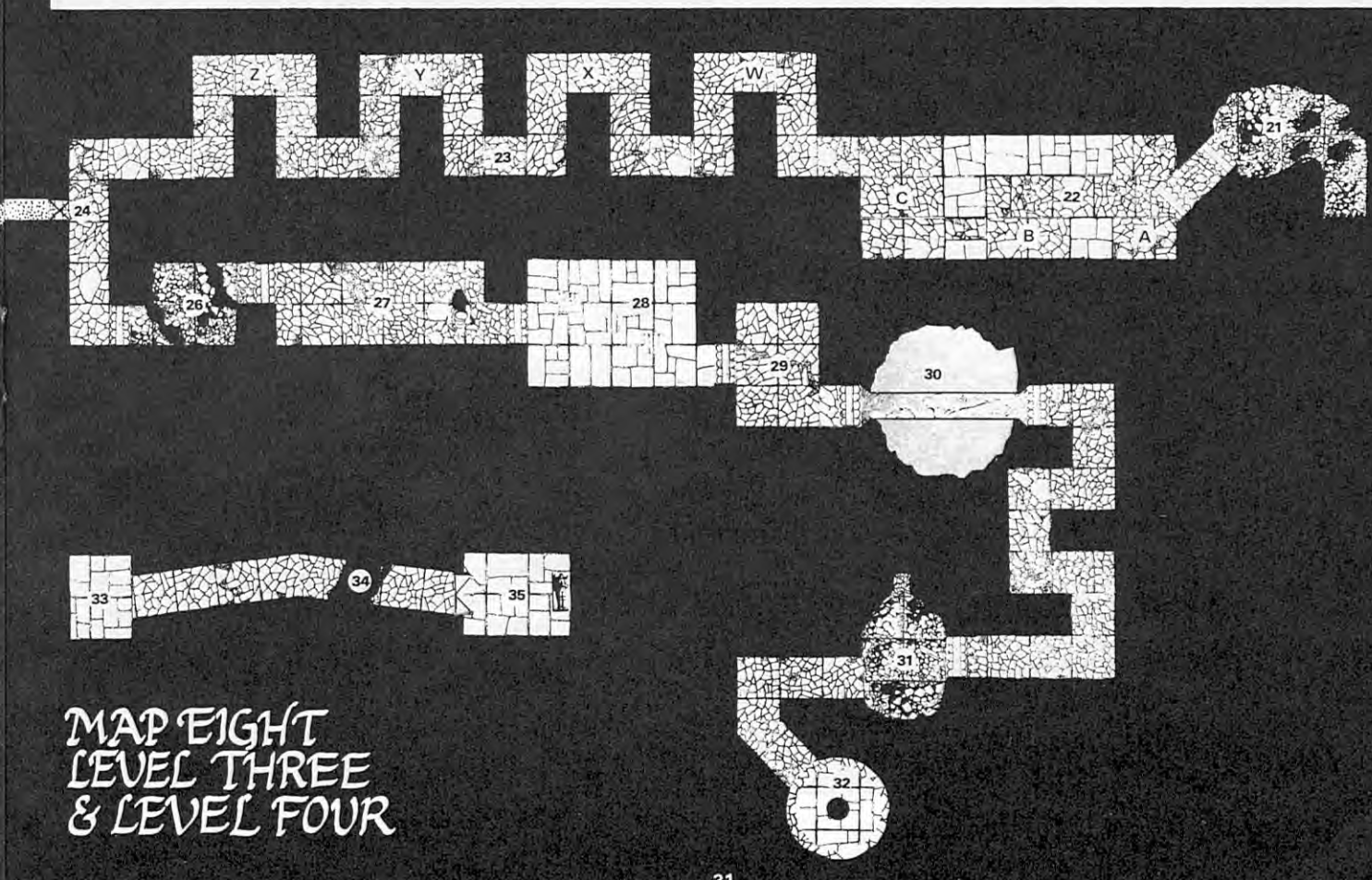
20. Rough Walled Passage. 5' high, it slopes steeply downwards. A strong wind blows up and it will extinguish any torches. A modified *continual darkness* spell (cast at tenth level of ability) absorbs all colour and dims light to 25% of its brilliance (*regardless* of sources).

Level Three (Map 8)

The entire level is lit by *continual light* spells (cast at twelfth level of ability). It is characterised by magical and illusory effects. The power and control for these is provided by the black pillar (Castle Courtyard, F).

Characters are not entitled to a saving throw against the illusions unless actively trying to disbelieve them; saves are made at -3. Illusory effects triggered off or disbelieved, and spells cast by rooms 're-set' after twelve hours and function exactly as before. Illusions feel solid and make convincing noises when hit. Doors on this level are made of a purple metal, and unless otherwise stated, have been forced open by the earlier party.

21. This is a rough, cave-like room. There are numerous six-inch diameter holes in the roof. Out of these a strong wind is blowing, mak-



MAP EIGHT
LEVEL THREE
& LEVEL FOUR

ing roaring, booming, shrieking noises. If the party pauses here, the noise of the wind will sound like a moaning voice crying, 'go back!'. Over the south-west exit, there is an inscription, 'Beyond here sees no seeing eyes.'

22. This large room is divided into three illusory rooms. These will survive striking, touching etc – in fact, anything short of successful disbelieving.

A. The walls of this 'room' are smooth and bare. The *continual light* spell here is modified and sheds a warm pink glow.

B. The walls, floor and ceiling here are lined with 'gold' shaped into strange patterns – flowers, elephants, countless weird symbols (all of which are meaningless). No attempt to remove the 'gold' will be successful.

C. The walls of this room are gaily painted with row after row of pictures of puffins, men building houses, goats, sheep, dwarves eloping with beautiful princesses, etc. On the floor is a pile of 5,000 *illusory* gold pieces. If they are believed and carried away, they have twice the regular encumbrance value, and furthermore, will disappear when the party leaves the dungeon.

When the party has crossed through all three 'rooms', they will disappear at once, revealing the completely bare true rooms – an object lesson in the power of illusion!

23. Corridor. This stretch is a slight variation of the *teleporting corridor trick* beloved of dungeon builders.

W. Anyone passing this point will 45% of the time be *teleported* to point y, and without him realising it. If a party is involved, they all go at once.

X. The first time this point is passed, the noise of a 10 die *fireball* exploding will be heard from round the corner.

Z. Anyone passing this point will 75% of the time be *teleported* to point X, and made to face the opposite direction – again, without realising it.

24. Door. 3' high and barred on the corridor side. There is no lock. Almeris and his men ignored this door on their way through.

25. Community of Dark Creepers [*FF*]. The passages beyond the door are narrow, damp and dirty. The Earthfriends ignored the creepers provided they stayed their own side of the door, and they have lived long undisturbed.

P. The lair of 5 dark creepers. (AC0[8]; HD1+1; HTK6,5,3,9,2; Move: 9"; Damage: 1-4. Abilities: *Detect magical items* at 15', *create darkness* three times a day, 4th level thief abilities.)

Q. The lair of 6 dark creepers (HTK7,7,5,5,4,3). They have 30gp.

R. The lair of a dark stalker (AC0[8]; HD2+1; HTK12; Move: 9"; Damage: 1-6. Abilities: Those of dark creeper, plus *wall of fog* twice per day. This particular one can also cast *phantasmal force* twice per day.)

S. This path leads up to a fissure in the cliff, from where the creepers slip out at night to throttle seabirds, sheep and goats for food.

The dark creepers will use all their powers to cause maximum annoyance, and the dark stalker will vary normal tactics with the use of *phantasmal force*.

26. This room is bare apart from the existance of a 30' wide illusory fissure across the floor. This fissure appears to go down, down and down, for countless thousands of feet. The crack appears so deep that creatures with less than 9 Constitution must save against poison or be overcome with dizziness and be sick. At the bottom of the hole, there is a bright red glow, and tongues of flame. The more keen-sighted may see some of the larger demons prancing about. Anyone stepping firmly off the edge would feel a solid floor beneath his feet.

27. Statue Room. At the eastern end stands a metal statue with crudely human features on a circular pedestal 1' high. It holds a wand in its right hand. The statue can swivel on its pedestal, and its right arm can move up and down. The wand is a *Wand of Magic Missiles* (75 charges) and the statue will turn to fire at anything that moves (maximum of two shots per round; hitting as a 3HD monster for 2-5 damage). It can be confused by rolling things along the ground to draw its fire. The statue can take 25 hits (AC5), or can be bent out of shape in such a way as to immobilise it by making a bend bars/lift gates roll. The magic word for a human to operate the wand is 'Law'.

On the floor at the western end lies the skeleton, with black chainmail, sword and shield, of the first of Almeris' men to fall.

28. The illusion in this room is not unlike the 6th level illusionist spell, *veil*. It apparently contains a thick growth of tropical plants in swampy water – there will be great big lush, broad-leafed trees, small ferns with hairy stems, fleshy orchids etc. Movement through is at 1/20th normal unless the illusion is disbelieved.

The illusion conceals 3 snap-shut pits with wooden lids (operate on 1-3 on d6 for 1-6HPs damage). These of course will be difficult to see, and it may be difficult to work out exactly what has happened to someone who disappears down one.

29. Figure Illusions. In this room are four illusory figures. They are dressed in red tunics. Their hair is dark and neatly brushed.

Each illusion can take 14 hits before dispersing. The illusions will surround the party and use their spells (as 3rd level illusionists). Their spells are cast without any verbal, somatic or material requirements. In this case, normal saving throws are applicable.

Figure A: *Colour spray, dancing lights, blur*.

Figure B: *Fog cloud, blindness* (the effect will persist for only 4 rounds or until the figure is dispersed), *colour spray*.

Figure C: *Wall of fog, blur, deafness* (see Figure B, *blindness*, above).

Figure D: *Phantasmal force, audible glamer, hypnotic pattern* (this will last for 3 rounds).

The purpose of the illusions is to annoy, frighten and damage.

30. White Marble Room. Lined with white marble. This room is floored with a lake of peculiarly limpid liquid, of unbelievable clarity. In its depths are countless shifting colours. At points, and at various depths, in the pool are slight thickenings in the clarity, suggesting human forms (both male and female). The liquid is viscous, a preservative, and has a numbing effect. Total immersion results in swift unconsciousness and death in one turn, although rescue is possible. There is a man in black chain-mail floating face upwards, quite dead, about 1' below the surface of the pool. This is another of Almeris' men. If fished out, he is equipped as a normal adventurer, but has a small jade Asustren charm and 10gp.

The pool is crossed by a marble bridge 6' wide with no handrail. When the party reaches half way, the room casts a *shadow monsters* spell (4th level illusionist spell) as a 10th level illusionist. The monsters produced are always 10 goblins. In this case, the characters are allowed an automatic saving throw, whether they try to disbelieve or not. Those fighting on the bridge must roll under their dexterity on d20 every time they score a hit, or fall into the pool. Anyone fished out of the pool before the end of one turn will revive after twenty-four hours plus one hour per round of immersion.

31. This room is rough-hewn and full of jagged spikes of rock. Through the arch to the north is total darkness. The *continual light* here is modified to give the effect of a rapid dull red strobe. The whole appearance of the place is alarming.

This room can cast a *phantasmal killer* spell on all who enter here (as a 10th level illusionist). However, if the monster scores a hit, the victim is *not* killed. He will merely flee out of a randomly selected exit for 1-8 turns in blind panic. There is a 2% chance of contracting a form of permanent insanity [*DMG*]. Note that the northern exit is actually a *teleport* to one of the following locations (d6): 1-2, Enswick village centre; 3, castle chapel; 4, a point 5 miles west of Enswick; 5-6, the middle of section 25.

32. Circular Room. Around the edge runs a 1' wide walk which is 1' high. In the centre is a 3' diameter hole 200' deep down to the next level. A hook has been screwed into the rock directly above the hole. A few strands of rope still cling to the hook.

Level 4 (Map 8)

This was subjected to a peculiar earth movement some years ago. Walls were cracked and corridors have been distorted so that they are now parallelogram in cross section rather than rectangular.

33. The hole running down from level 3 emerges in this room.

34. There is a fissure 10' wide and 30' deep here.

35. Repository. The portals to this room (forced of course) are rather splendid gold-alloy double doors, worth 250gp each, but weighing the equivalent of 1,000.

This room is the dummy repository of the *Sunfire's Heart*, but was badly damaged in earth movements. A lot of rock fell from the roof, and the floor was heaved up in the centre towards the ceiling. Twelve 7' tall rock sarcophagi, with no decoration, are tumbled around and smashed except for one on the east wall which is still upright. A 5' tall pedestal is in the centre of the floor, with what appears to be a gently glowing orb on top (this is the stand-in for the *Heart*: it radiates no magic). Nearby, what once might have been a very small stone golem lies crushed and smashed by a rock fall.

Touching the orb produces a 15' diameter cloud of very potent sleeping gas (save at -4 or sleep for 12 turns + 1-6 turns). Usually sleepers would be captured by the (now defunct) golem which was disguised as a statue. The golem would place them in the sarcophagi which would send them into suspended animation to take their chance in Time. The only person ever to be caught this way was Almeris.

The cover of the surviving sarcophagus can easily be lifted by two people. Its interior will immediately glow with bright white light. Inside is a man, who will first appear dead, then twitch, and finally revive after three rounds. This is: Almeris (AC2; HTK34; LVL6; CE; Cleric; mace armed. Str: 13; Int: 14; Wis: 16; Con: 12; Dex: 13; Cha: 17.) Spells: 1st – *Curse, command, create water, cause light wounds, cure light wounds*.

2nd – *Find traps, hold person, resist fire, silence 15' radius, augury*.

3rd – *Animate dead*.

Almeris is a handsome man of about forty (but looks younger), with rather heavy eyebrows and neat, short-cropped silver-grey hair. He is 6' tall and dressed in black plate mail which has a purple sheen to it. His gauntlets are of black leather with iron studs. A golden brooch with a device (symbolising Asustren) on it pins his dark purple cloak at the shoulder.

If Almeris is rescued by the party, he will ask the current date and explain how he became caught, but will pose as an ordinary adventurer looking for treasure. He will deny all knowledge of the Earthfriends, the *Heart* etc. Almeris wishes to leave the dungeon promptly to continue his search for the *Heart*, having realised that this room is a deception. Having got out, he will probably link up with Welandt's party, who will then take orders from him.

The players will find Almeris a man of authority (as befits Asustren's most powerful cleric and the rightful priest-king of the Black Islands) but at the same time pleasant and flatteringly courteous. He speaks common tongue with a faint old-world air. He carries a disc of neutral aura like those of Welandt's party. He will be only too willing to do the party an evil turn after he has escaped the dungeon.□

Next Issue: Part 2 – On to the Island of Rammas.

THE TRAVELLERS

by Mike Harrison with a helping tentacle from Nic Weeks

CHAPTER 5: BLAST OFF

Having secured the deal with the mysterious PATRON, **Hayes** must now do the difficult part... telling **Captain Flinn**...

The PATRON arrives...

Jump-drive repaired, the **Osprey** leaves...

On board the crew relax, safe in the knowledge that **Regina's space pursuit corp** is on strike for better pay... here the PATRON is introduced to the *real* **Captain Flinn**...*

CALM DOWN MR. FLINN THERE'S A GOOD CHANCE YOU'LL SEE THE END OF THIS ADVENTURE... PROVIDING READER RESPONSE DOESN'T AXE THE SERIES. FIRST...
Boo hoo... All I want is my ship back... Boo hoo, "sniffle"
YOU ARE NOW LEAV
REGINA SPACE
PLEASE CO
AGAIN
TURNING RIGHT...
...lovely gun... nice gun... Gavin's little baby....
hurrr...
scratch rip!
KEEP OUT! MY SPACE!
SKREEEE

Plying the Spacelanes

Ship Encounters in Traveller

by Paul Vernon

The Starship Encounter Tables in *Basic Traveller* and *Supplement 7, Traders and Gunboats*, although adequate in many situations, leave much to be desired if used in a campaign situation over any length of time. Encounters with other vessels should be far more likely in systems with high populations and tech levels, for example, but by concentrating only on starport types on the one hand and a basic throw of 6+ on the other, the rules fail to take this into account. They also tend to make many star system encounters basically the same.

Ideally, each star system should have a unique quality of its own.

Encounter Chances

For each system visited there will usually be two chances for encountering other vessels – once when approaching the main world and once when leaving. The base chance for an encounter can be calculated using the population and tech level digits (from the planet's UPP) and the Starport Weighting from the table below. Add these three numbers together, divide by 3, drop any fractions and subtract the result from 14. If the system is posted as an amber zone add 1 to this figure, and similarly add 4 if it is a red zone. If a Scout Base is present in the system subtract 1, and also subtract 1 if there is a Naval Base.

If the resulting number or higher is thrown on 2d, then an encounter will take place. This number applies only when travelling to or from the main world and/or Gas Giant, however. Negative DMs should be applied for ships not in the main spacelanes.

Starport Weighting Table

Starport	*Weighting Index*	*Starport*	*Weighting Index*
A	11	D	3
B	8	E	1
C	5	X	0

Example: Regina has a UPP of A-788899-A. Its population and tech level digits are 8 and 10, and its A Class Starport gives a weighting of 11. The sum of these divided by 3 is 29/3=9⅔, and dropping the fractions and subtracting from 4 gives us 14-9=5. As both Scout and Naval Bases are present in the system we subtract 2 giving us a final result of 3. So an encounter will occur in the main Regina spacelanes on a 3+.

Non-Starships

For encountering non-starships, subtract the encounter chance from 12 and divide by 2, rounding upwards. Add 1 to this figure if the world is Rich, add 1 if the system contains an asteroid belt, and add a further 2 if the main world is itself an asteroid belt. If the resulting number or less is now thrown on 2d then the encounter will be a non-starship.

Example: Yori/Regina C-360757-D has no asteroid belt and an encounter chance of 6+. (12-6)/2 = 3. Any encounter in the Yori system will be with a non-starship on a throw of 3-.

Ship Classes

When a starship encounter occurs, the ship's class must be determined. Only broad classes should be given so that referees can choose the most appropriate ship. These broad classes are Naval, Independent, Scout, X-Boat, Merchant and Civil Vessels.

For determining the specific class of vessel encountered a six-column table should be prepared for each star system. One column should consist of official vessels – Naval (or Independent if the system is not a member of the Imperium),

Scout, and X-Boat (if the system is on the X-Boat routes). If the system has a Naval base an additional column should be for Naval/Independent vessels, and similarly there should be a Scout column if the system has a Scout base, and an X-Boat column if it contains a Scout Way Station. Official ships should occupy a maximum of 2 columns. If more than one of the above facilities is present in the system, use one column for Naval (or Independent) and the other for Scout (and X-Boat) vessels.

umn on the table. A full column should be devoted to them if the main world is rich, and/or there is an asteroid belt in the system. Remaining columns should be taken up by merchant vessels.

In columns containing more than one class of vessel there is an even chance for either to be encountered.

Some provision should be made for encountering Pirate vessels as an additional class, just to keep life interesting. Normally two columns will be marked with an asterisk, denoting that these ships will be pirates on a throw of 11+. If a Scout base is present in the system only one column will be so marked, however, and an encounter with pirates would be extremely unlikely in a system having a Naval Base. If a Civil vessel proves to be in piratical hands this could be a captured Naval or Scout ship in addition to a civil ship or Corsair. On a throw of 12+ the pirates will be encountered attacking a third vessel.

Similarly, there is a chance that *any* ship encountered will be in distress and asking for aid, on a throw of 12+.

Example: Roup/Regina C-77A9A9-6 is a stop on the X-Boat network, so the official ships' column will have provision for Naval, Scout, and X-Boat vessels. Also the system has a Scout base, so a further column will be taken by Scout vessels. We'll assume that an asteroid belt is present so civil vessels will take up a full column. Remaining columns will be taken up by merchant vessels.

Usually, two columns would be denoted as possible pirates, but only one in Roup's case due to the Scout base. Roup's listing on an encounter table would look like this.

Example Encounter Table

System	*Roup*	*Regina*	*Yori*
Encounter	8+	3+	6+
Non-Starship	3	6	3
1	N/S/X	N	N/S
2	S	S/X	M
3	M	M	M
4	M	M	M
5	M/C	M/C	M*
6	M/C*	M/C	M/C*
Starport	C	A	C

Notes: N = Naval vessels in service with the Imperial, Subsector, or Planetary navy (fleet couriers, transport ships, huge dreadnaughts etc). Non-starships could be fighters, system defence boats, or a variety of small craft engaged in routine tasks. Independent vessels (denoted 'I' in encounter tables) will be much the same, but found in non-imperial systems.

S = Scout vessels of the Imperial Scout Service, ranging from small scout/couriers through survey ships to heavy cruisers used to explore hostile space.

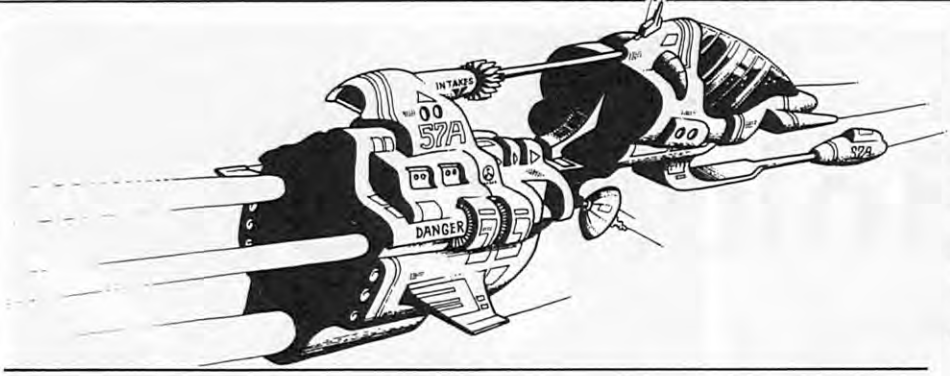
X = Vessels in service on the Imperial X-Boat network, including tenders and couriers in addition to the 100-ton X-Boats themselves. Non-starships would be found in connection with the running and maintenance of X-Boat stations.

M = Merchant vessels engaged in commercial ventures carrying cargoes and/or passengers between planets or stars. Starships range in size from 200-ton Free Traders to bulk carriers and luxury liners massing thousands of tons. Non-starships; small launches to large bulk carriers carrying materials between the main planet and outlying worlds.

C = Civil vessels – yachts, seekers, detached scouts, mercenary vessels, lab ships, vessels under charter, and any others in private hands. Non-starships will be of a similar nature, and include those of the Civil Starport Authorities. With this class of vessel it is useful to determine the vessel's mission [see below] before fixing upon a specific type.

Ships' Business

The mission table can be used to determine ships' missions by throwing 1d6 and referencing according to ship class, applying the following DMs: X class starport -2, E class -1, B class +1, A class +2.



When's the Next Ship to...?
This is a question often asked of *Traveller* referees, usually when they're least prepared for it! It can be answered quite easily, however, by using the encounter chances of the departure and destination worlds. Add these two figures together, divide by two, and knock off any remaining fractions. Add the jump distance between the worlds (ie add 2 if the worlds are Jump-2 apart) and consult the Ship Frequency Table.

Missions Table

Ship Class	1-	2	3	4	5	6+
Scout	Exploration	Patrol	Survey	Courier	Survey	Courier
Naval	FLT Manoeuvre	Patrol	Escort	Transfer	Courier	Patrol
X-Boat	Courier	Commo	Imp Courier	Commo	Imp Commo	Courier
Independent	Patrol	FLT Manoeuvre	Patrol	Escort	Courier	Escort
Merchant	Exploration	Trade/ Transport	Trade	Trade/ Transport	Transport	Transport
Civil	Prospecting	Business	Pleasure	Charter	Pleasure	Business

Note: A Class Starport +2, B Class +1, E Class -1, X Class -2. Naval non-starships should be treated as Independent for the purposes of this table.

Formulae

Encounter Chance = (Tech Level + Pop digit + Starport Weighting)/3 rounded down, subtracted from 14. +1 if Amber Zone, + if Red Zone, -1 if scout base, -1 if naval base.

Non-Starship Chance = (12 – Encounter Chance)/2 rounded up. +1 if rich world, +1 if asteroid belt, +2 if asteroid belt main world.

Frequency Rating = (Departure World Encounter Chance + Destination World Encounter Chance)/2 rounded up, + jump distance between worlds.

Ship Frequency Table

Frequency Rating	*Ship Frequency* A	B
2-	5/Day	4/Day
3	4/Day	3/Day
4	3/Day	2/Day
5	2/Day	1/Day
6	1/Day	1/2 Days
7	2/3 Days	1/3 Days
8	1/2 Days	1/7 Days
9	1/3 Days	1/14 Days
10	1/7 Days	12/Year (1/30 Days)
11	1/14 Days	6/Year
12	1/30 Days	4/Year
13	4/Year	3/Year
14	2/Year	2/Year
15	1/Year	1/Year
16+	None	None

Note: Column A is for dense trade route areas, B for other areas.

Patrol missions involve travelling between worlds and bases to ascertain that all is as it should be. Any problems encountered will be attended to, and patrolling vessels will be likely to stop others to check that their papers and cargoes conform to legal requirements.

Survey missions require the collecting and/or correcting of astronomical and planetary data.

Courier missions carrying goods and/or personnel.

Exploration missions to (or from) unexplored regions. In settled regions substitute patrol for trade instead.

Fleet Manoeuvres involve at least three naval or independent vessels in military exercises. Other vessels will be warned to keep their distance.

Escort Missions, accompanying other vessels for security reasons.

Ships on transfer are on their way to their next mission.

Crews on Imperial missions will be full of their own importance and waste no time with lesser beings (ie players).

Communications Missions involve information transfer between worlds.

Transport Missions involve the carriage of goods and passengers between worlds for standard fees, Trade Missions, the carriage of speculative cargoes, and Trade and Transport a mixture of both. Where an asterisk appears there is a 1 in 6 chance that the ship is also involved in smuggling or some other illegal activity.

The exact nature of business missions will depend upon the type of ship concerned. Lab ships will be involved in scientific research, detached scouts working for a patron, seekers in mining etc.

Missions; examining planets and asteroids for minerals.

Pleasure missions involve travelling to magnificent natural phenomena or beautiful/pleasurable planets solely for the enjoyment of passengers.

The nature of charter missions depend upon the person(s) chartering the vessel: bands of pilgrims visiting a sacred world, business magnates going to or from important meetings etc.

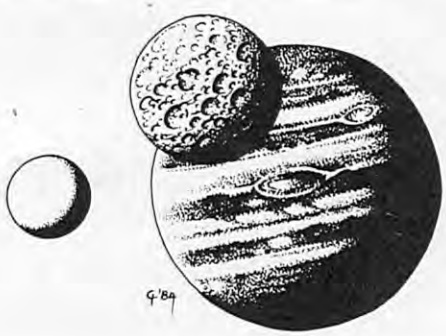
Example: A players' ship jumps into the Roup system intending to refuel at a secondary before continuing its journey without visiting the main world. The referee throws 8 on 2d, which would usually be sufficient for an encounter. As the ship is staying away from the main spacelanes, however, the referee imposes a DM of -2 giving 6, so no encounter occurs on the way to the gas giant.

Whilst returning to a safe jump point after refuelling the referee throws a 10, enough for an encounter in spite of a -2 DM. A second throw gives 4, and as this would have to be 3- for a non-starship to be encountered, another starship is in the area. One die is thrown and gives 6 on the ship class table, either a merchant (1-3) or a civil(4-6) vessel. A 2 is thrown, and the referee decides it is a Type A2 Far Trader. The ship could be a pirate on 11+ or requesting assistance on 12+, but the referee throws two 7s and decides it is neither.

A 4 is thrown on the missions table, and no DMs are applied as Roup has a class C starport, so the trader is on a trade and transport mission. There is a 1 in 6 chance that the ship is also involved in some illegal activity. This proves to be the case, and the referee decides the ship is carrying rare foodstuffs much in demand (and heavily taxed) on Roup, and is waiting to rendezvous with a Roup based launch to transfer this consignment before proceeding to the starport.

Example: A character wishes to get from Roup to Regina, but has no ship of his own. Adding together the encounter chances, dividing by two and dropping fractions we get (8+3)/2 = 5½ so 5. Roup and Regina are jump-3 apart, so 5+3 gives us a frequency rating of 8. From the Ship Frequency Table we see that a ship departs Roup once every two days. The referee throws 5 on 1d and tells the player that the next ship leaves the following day. Referees can decide whether or not there will be any vacant berths aboard by using the passengers table in *Basic Traveller*.

The Ship Frequency Table gives us only scheduled passenger vessels, however. There will be about twice as many scheduled freighters carrying cargoes only, in addition to which there is a chance that an unscheduled tramp trader will be making the trip and have a berth available. To see if a tramp trader calls, 2d may be thrown each time period in the relevant ship frequency entry (day, week, month or year) and if the frequency rating is equalled or exceeded (count ratings of 13+ as 12) an unscheduled trader has arrived.□



Tabletop Heroes *is a regular department for figure reviews by Joe Dever and Gary Chalk. This issue, a look at science fiction figures.*

To Boldly Go...

This month we're taking a look at some of the Sci-Fi miniatures currently available to the SF gamer. Although 'Fantasy' seems to command the lion's share of manufacturers catalogues, there are still many excellent RPG miniatures available in both 25mm and 15mm scales for those of you who prefer deep space to dungeons. If you use the larger scale (25mm), you can add to and vary existing figures with some very basic conversions.

Fig 1 shows a SF Troop Carrier or 'military shuttle' that originally started life as a WWII German armoured car. The basic body is a 1/35th scale *Tamiya* kit that has the following additions: Wings and 'appliqué' armour (which simply means it has plates of armour 'bolted on' wherever necessary) cut from .040 Plasticard; landing legs and rear fins salvaged from various old kits; heavy laser and twin searchlights taken from a 1/35th scale WWII accessory pack; and exhaust ports and conduits made from disposable razor handles and biro refills. Jumble sales are rewarding places to visit for broken or old plastic kits, which can be given a new lease of life as useful bits of 'pseudo-tech' to deck out any SF conversion. But always be prepared to find some of the best 'kit-bashing' materials in the most unlikeliest of places. The rocket pods on top of the craft started life as plastic salt and pepper pots, and were 'requisitioned' for imperial service from my young son's toy tea set (...is nothing sacred?!). Toy cars, trucks and 1/72nd scale military kits can also be applied with 'techno-junk' to hide their origins, and in turn provide the SF gamer with cheap and effective 'hardware' backup for his miniatures.

Fig 2 shows a couple of 25mm star troopers from *Tabletop Games* of Nottingham. *TTG* produce the excellent *Laserburn* Sci-Fi combat and role-playing system which we highly recommend if you are looking for a 'realistic-but-fun' set of close-combat rules. They come complete with templates for weapon/blast effects, and are specifically designed for use with both 15mm and 25mm scale miniatures. If the thought of commanding space-pirates, outlaws or revolutionaries against squads of imperial marines; battling it out in some beleaguered space port or on a cratered asteroid, is enough to inspire you to start SF gaming then its worth considering which scale to use. 25mm is the most popular scale for fantasy gaming, but for Sci-Fi gaming the nature of combat is very different. Unless your scenarios are restricted exclusively to shipboard close-combat, both the range and accuracy of SF weaponry dictates the need for a large playing area. By choosing the smaller 15mm scale, you can automatically increase the ground-scale of your playing surface. *TTG* produce a special range of 15mm figures specifically designed for use with *Laserburn*. They are well detailed and supported by some superb 15mm vehicles, that are well-priced at around 75p to £2.25.

Grenadier Models have recently produced a boxed set of Imperial Marines, two of which are seen in action in *Fig 3*. Each set contains a complete section of these heavily-armoured assault troops, together with a useful rocket-launcher (a sort of Sci-Fi mortar for close support). Designed by John Dennet and Andrew Chernak (designer of the *Call of Cthulhu* figures set), they are available as part of the 'Official Traveller Range'. Adventurers, Ship Crew and Alien Animals are also available at £7.95 per box, with further releases due in the autumn.

Flying vehicles and jet-packing adventurers always seem to pose a problem during a game when they take to the air. One solution is shown in *Fig 4*. The *Citadel* adventurer and his hover bike are resting on a perspex about 20mm wide by 50mm high. Generally we've found that one rod of this size is all that is needed to support a single figure or small vehicle, whilst two or more can be used for larger craft. The main advantages of using perspex rods are that they occupy a small area of ground space, and enable you to use airborne troops and craft in combat with miniatures on the table. Being transparent, the illusion of being 'in flight' is greatly increased. These rods are available in all lengths, colours and diameters and are reasonably priced. (The address of a London supplier is given at the end of this article.)

Fig 5 depicts a *Citadel Imperial Marine* advancing with a laser rifle (s33), and wearing the highly reflective 'Star Wars' battle armour. Whatever happened to the evolution of camouflage? This figure is part of the *Spacefarers* range that was originally released back in 1981.

In *Fig 6*, we have a couple of Redemptionist fanatics about to be savaged by a pack of robo-dogs. The figure on the far left was originally a 'fantasy' wizard. His staff was cut away and substituted with a laser rifle from the *Citadel* Sci-Fi weapons pack. A backpack was added from scrap plastic and a power line made from twisted fuse wire was used to connect the two. His partner is a Star Lane pirate equipped with a laser pistol. The robo-dogs are made by *Asgard Miniatures*, and the full details of their capabilities can be found in the latest *Laserburn* supplement – 'Robot Book' [*TTG*: £1.85]. *Asgard* produce both 25mm and 15mm SF ranges, the latter being a copy of the former. If you are looking for some really tough troops, then check out their 'dreadnought' armoured startroopers. The following description by Bryan Ansell of *Citadel* will give you some idea of their capability: "If power armour has replaced the light tank, the 'Dreadnought' has replaced the main battle tank. Toughened armour plate with an immensely powerful exo-skeleton, it usually incorporates heavy weaponry and a specially powerful jetpack."

We have found that an excellent source of SF weaponry can be found in the various weaponpacks supplied for use with 1/35th scale plastic figures. By converting and re-shaping the parts, totally new and original weapons can be made. A SF grenade-launcher, for example, can be made by adding the top section of a German WWII 'potato-masher' grenade to the breach section of an assault rifle. Needle rifles, hand flamers and sunguns can all be converted from submachine gun parts, whilst 1/35th scale bayonets make the ideal light sabres!

We'd like to thank those readers who have written in to us over the past few months with queries and comments. If

15mm support vehicles for the Laserburn *figures range. Photo shows an 'Anti-grav' version of the Glaive transport (left) with a Partisan scout vehicle (right). The trike is crewed by two redemptionist rebels – one driving and the other blasting!*

Three of the 15mm Laserburn *miniatures available from* Tabletop Games. *They are finely detailed and compatible with the* Traveller *boxed sets from* Citadel.

Fig 1

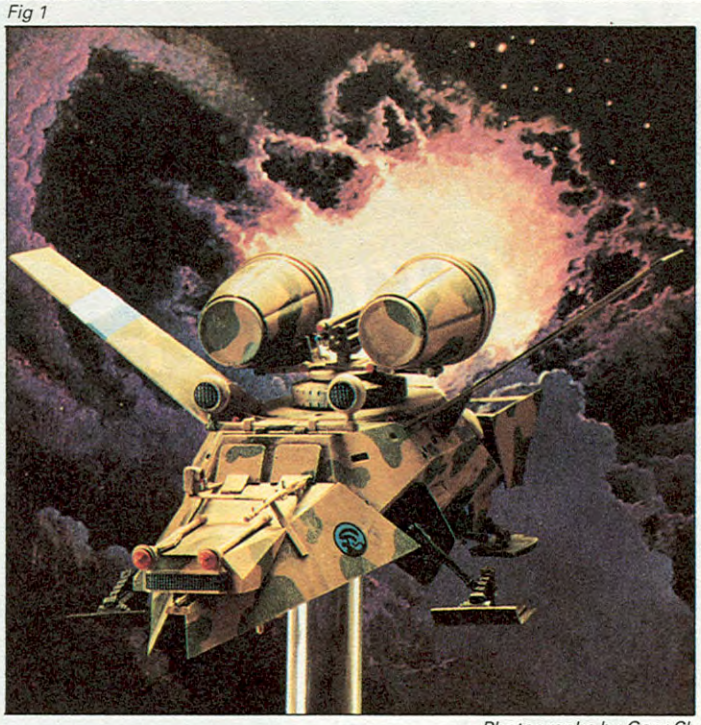


Fig 2

Photographs by Gary Chalk and Joe Dever

you would like further details on how to achieve some of the painting techniques shown in the photographs, then drop us a line with an SAE, care of *White Dwarf*, and we'll do our best to help out.

Useful Addresses
Tabletop Games, 53 Mansfield Road, Daybrook, Nottingham; *Marchmade Perspex*, Dean Street, London W1; *Asgard Miniatures*, 97 Carrington Street, Nottingham NG1 7FE.□

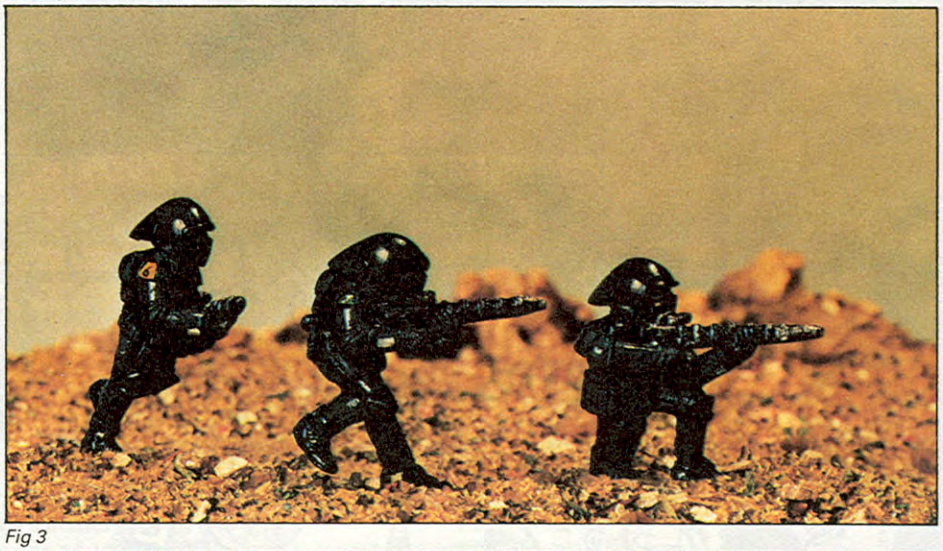


Fig 3

Fig 4

Fig 5

Fig 6

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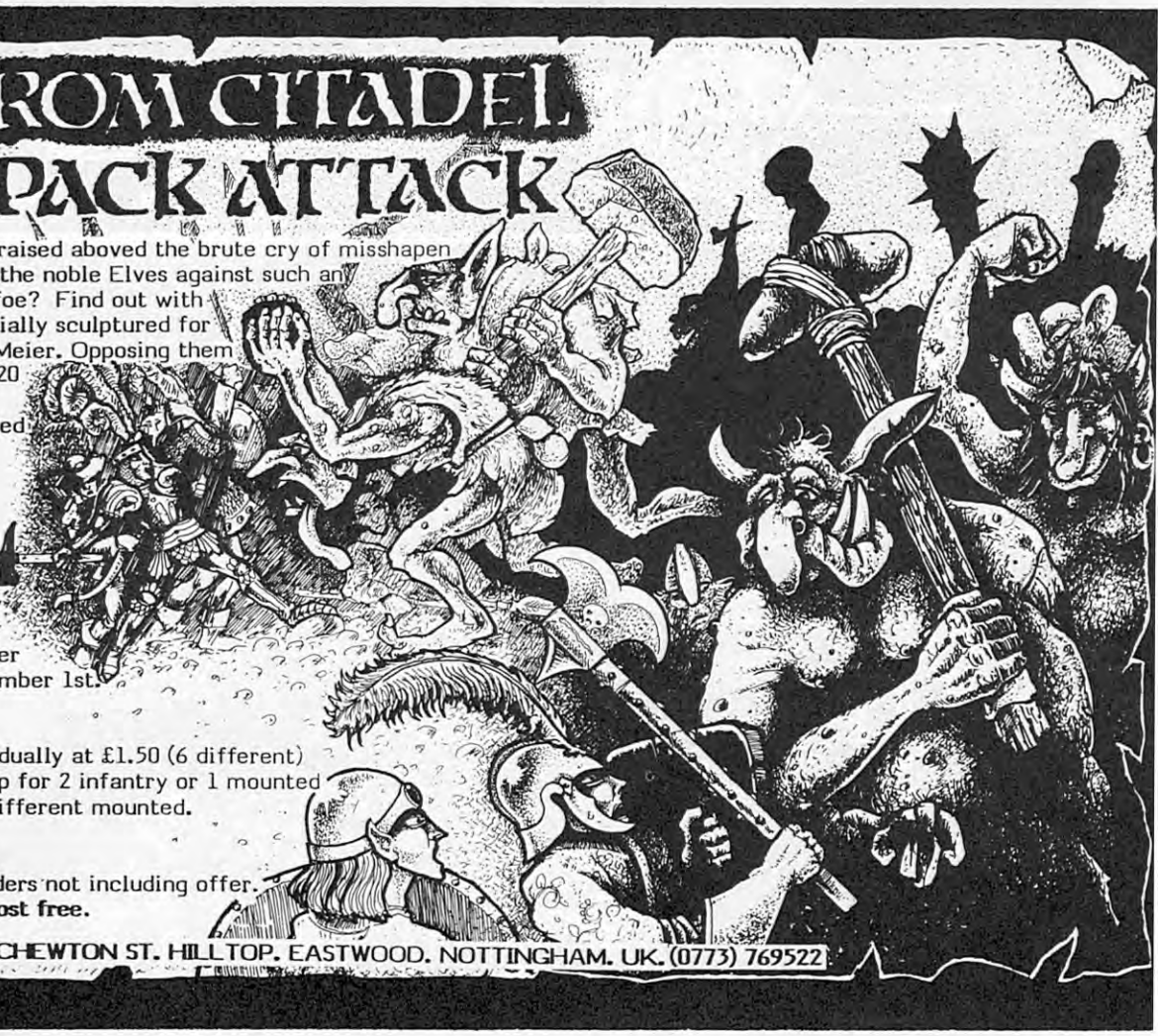

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Dear *WD*,

Congratulations! *WD54* was the best you have produced since number 32. The reason for this, I think, was that there were more articles aimed at role-players in general and not just the chosen few *AD&D*ers.

I have been annoyed, however, with your approach to the subject of multi-system adventures. If you are going to bother with them why don't you give stats for some of the less popular systems such as *C&S, DQ* and *T&T*? I also think it is time that you stopped ignoring *FGU* games; *Aftermath, Bushido, C&S* and *Space Opera* were all given extremely good reviews in your magazine, but in the time I have been buying *WD* I have only seen three scenarios for *FGU* systems.

Why, oh why do we have to put up with ridiculous arguments between FRP weirdos about hobbits of all things? It's no wonder people think we're mad!

Yours constructively,
Russell Henry, Stockton-on-Tees.

Much as we would like to have scenarios for the FGU *games you mention appearing in the magazine, we are at the mercy of our contributors! And, as for the letters about hobbits, the final word as far as* WD *is concerned is... – Ed.*

Dear *WD*,

WD54 is, by a very long way, the best issue of an RPG prozine that I have seen in a long while. Why do you have to do this just after I've been sacked by *Imagine* so that I can't give you the praise that you deserve – not only will people just accuse me of being bitchy, but they probably won't believe me.

Anyway, what is so wonderful about the issue? Well the appearance is pretty spectacular for a start, but you've also got three really good articles: Chris Hunt's, Ian Marsh's and the Treasure Chest feature. Good grief, a whole five pages of useful material! And Langford shredding *Battlefield Earth* which is only boring because I've heard it so many times already.

Cheers,
Pete Tamlyn, Aylesbury.

Dear *WD*,

I am writing to express concern over accusations of depravity [*WD47*] and satanism [*WD54*] levelled at fantasy role-playing games.

Having scanned *WD* back issues I can sympathise with such criticisms; every issue is full of illustrations, stories and advertisements which could easily be construed as indecent in any number of ways.

Ian Livingstone [*WD54*] rightly discounts such ill-formed opinions, but it is insufficient simply to dismiss this negative aspect. Indeed, such publicised debates may attract to the hobby those already interested in satanism. As gamers, we should seek to advance the positive nature of fantasy role-playing; its creative and historical element, the notion of co-operation and the essential fun and humour of the hobby.

This would save us from lapsing into entrenched ideologies which cannot benefit FRP. We must endear ourselves to a wider public and overcome by persuasion, not dogma.

Yours,
Peter Schoff, London.

Dear *WD*,

Alex McDonald may have put his finger on a major flaw in the Vivamort cult, since total loss of POW should mean complete annihilation [*WD49*, p20]. However, it is clear that from the account of Vivamort in *Cults of Terror* that the Devil has somehow provided a means for survival of consciousness without POW. In the ceremony which turns an Initiate into a Rune Lord or Priest, Vivamort clearly arranges for this to happend to the Initiate, if the latter is successful. The new vampire will start at 0 POW, though, and had better do some draining fast!

Keep up the good work,
Oliver Dickinson, Haxby, York.

Dear *WD*,

It was with increasing dismay that I found Messrs Chalk's and Dever's pitiful efforts still in the pages of *White Dwarf* [issue *54*]. Their photographs continue to show that neither of these gentlemen know much about the principles of photographing miniature figures, nor can either paint miniatures particularly well (although a twelve-year-old would be proud of their 'standards', I hasten to add). If some creative improvement is to be applied, the flat uninspiring backgrounds (obviously pictures, as opposed to being carefully chosen parts of the set) and lack of depth of field (from poor angling and set up of the camera) are the first items that should be brushed up. However, reading the column provokes only more dismay; the gentlemen can obviously not write particularly well, except, perhaps, to continually praise *Citadel* (your 'house' figure range) and *Essex Miniatures* almost without exception; as a result, I cannot believe any judgement to be impartial in this column. I hope your readers will prefer to believe their own eyes instead of their verbose comments; standards acceptable to wargamers of five or so years ago cannot be tolerated by the more quality-aware and selective market that exists in rolegaming. I shall certainly continue to exercise my judgement from close inspection of the figures in my local games shop, rather than believe the laughable figure column in your magazine.

Yours,
Matt Mayson, Coventry.

Dear *WD*,

Fame at last! Criticised by Dave Langford! The honour! As the perpetrator of the Grey Dominators [*WD52*] whom Dave accuses me of misappropriating from the works of Harry Harrison [*WD54*], I can only plead Guilty But Insane, m'lud. The fault was one of carelessness, not malice, m'lud, and I would like to ask that the incident of the Wodennians in *WD44* be taken into consideration – with all due apologies to Poul Anderson... Despite all this, I do apologise for my past carelessness, but ours is a hobby based on borrowings, and it would probably fade away if they were removed. (Same goes for a lot of the SF/Fantasy books on the market, of course.)

Yours Derivatively,
Phil Masters, Stevenage, Herts.

Fiend Factory *is a regular department featuring readers' monsters for* D&D/AD&D, *edited by Albie Fiore. This issue, some creatures from the Planes.*

High Planes Drifters

ROK-OR
by James Waterfield

No Appearing:	1-6
Armour Class:	−4
Movement:	9"
Hit Dice:	9d8
Treasure:	Special, see below
Attack:	Two claws for 1d12 each, bite for 2d10
Alignment:	Neutral
Intelligence:	Average

The rok-or is a huge (12') beast with a thick exo-skeleton of a stone-like carapace.

Being creatures from the *Elemental Plane of Earth*, they have the ability to move easily through solid rock. Normally, rok-or live within mountains, surfacing on rare occasions to feed. They crave gems and can detect them from a distance of 60'. They will attack anyone with gems, eating them whole to get at the precious stones.

Due to a rok-or's ability to merge with rock, it surprises anyone, except dwarves and gnomes, on 1-4 on 1d6. The claws of a rok-or are amazingly sharp and powerful: they can easily slash any non-magical metal armour to shreds, completely destroying it. If the victim has a shield, there is a 50% chance that the shield will be destroyed instead of the armour.

The stone-like armour of the rok-or gives it total immunity to any fire-based attacks (eg *fireballs*). It can also resist electrical attacks to a certain degree, taking half damage if failing its saving roll and taking no damage if it saves successfully. Edged weapons do no damage to the rok-or and have a 50% chance of breaking (−5% for each +1 of the weapon) on striking the creature. Blunt weapons do full damage with no chance of breaking.

Slingstones, giant boulders, etc hurled at a rok-or are simply absorbed into the creature if they strike. Slingstones give the beast 1 extra hit point per stone, while large boulders give it an additional 10 hit points. If a rok-or is not killed in battle, it can regenerate hit points by simply retreating into the rock, regaining 10 hit points for every turn spent in rock.

The treasure of a rok-or is found inside the stomach where 1d100 gems may be found depending on the age (hit points) of the beast.

MAGMITE
by Roger E Moore

No Appearing:	3-10
Armour Class:	3
Movement:	9"
Hit Dice:	4d8+2
Treasure:	P,R,Y (special)
Attack:	4d4 touch, plus special
Alignment:	Neutral (lawful tendencies)
Intelligence:	Very

Magmites are very rarely encountered creatures from the *Elemental Plane of Fire*, where they are usually found in lava caves near pools of molten rock or metal. Efreeti brought a few of them to the *Prime Material Plane* as treasure guards, a few of whom escaped to form small colonies in volcanic regions near active lava flows.

A typical magmite stands 2' tall and resembles a thick-limbed, four-legged spider with broad pad-like feet. It appears to be made of molten rock that glows bright orange-red with yellow and

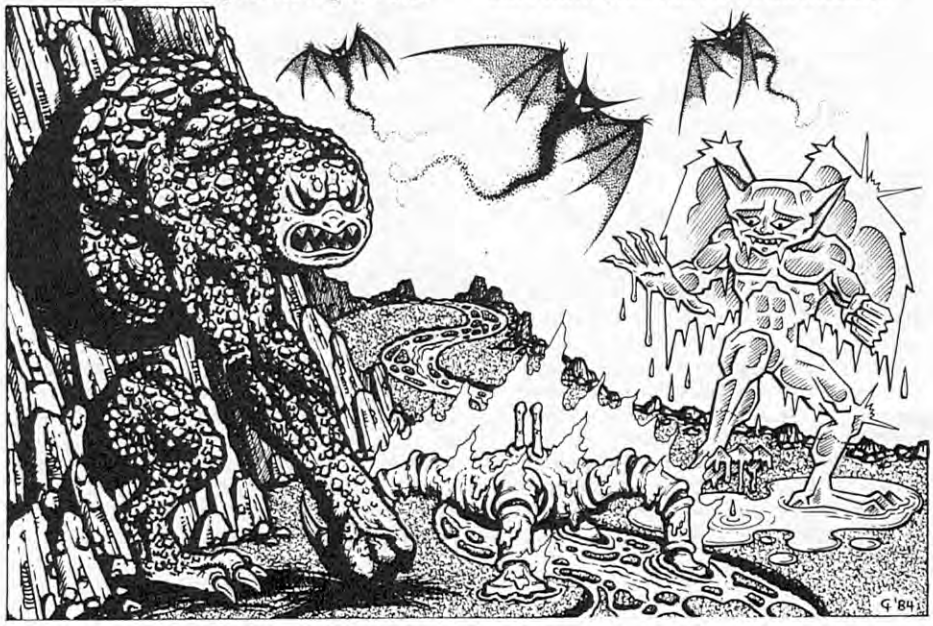
white streaks and spots. There seems to be no definite front or face to the creature, and it can set off walking in any direction from a standing start. Its excellent heat-sensitive 'vision' (120' radius) is provided by two six-inch antennae which project up from the central body. Other than that, they appear to have no sense of smell, hearing or taste but are known to possess very good tactile senses.

An aura of intense heat surrounds the magmite to a 5' radius; any creature within this aura attacks at −2 to hit due to the heat and will suffer 1 point of heat damage every other round unless they have some magical resistance to heat. There is no saving throw for the heat damage from the aura.

Magmites are immune to most spells, but a few affect them. Any *heat* or *fire* based spells will restore any damage suffered by the magmite on a 1 for 1 basis. Normal non-magical fires and heat sources do not affect them. All *cold* or *frost* based spells or attacks will *slow* magmites for 1 round per hit dice damage of the attack, though no actual damage will be caused to them. Water, either magically produced or natural, will not affect a magmite at all but will be turned immediately into a 10' diameter cloud of steam around the creature. This cloud will last for 2-5 rounds and effectively blinds the magmite and any others within the cloud.

Magmites are unaffected by poison, which their body heat destroys before it can affect the creature. They are also immune to all save magical weapons.

Anything that touches a magmite (ex-



cept living creatures or solid rock) must make a saving throw against magical fire or melt and be destroyed; magical items receive appropriate bonuses, and *flametongue* swords or weapons are immune from destruction. *Frostbrand* swords will do only 1 point of damage per hit. Scrolls or spells that *protect* from enchanted monsters or elementals will keep magmites at bay.

The treasure of these creatures will often consist of several pools of molten precious metals and a few fire-resistant gemstones. Less often, this treaure is in a solid, though extremely hot, condition and is stored in rocky pits or tunnels within the colony's lair.

Magmites possess a limited form of *telepathy* that allows them to communicate mentally with persons within 30' of them and with other magmites. They have no other psionic-type powers.

ICE MEPHIT
by John S Davies

No Appearing:	1
Armour Class:	4
Movement:	12"/24"
Hit Dice:	3d8+1
Treasure:	1d10 platinum pieces
Attack:	Two claws for 1d4 each, plus special
Alignment:	Variable, usually evil, and mostly lawful evil
Intelligence:	Average

Ice mephits are most commonly found on the frozen *Eighth Plane of Hell*. Steam, fire or lava mephits entering these frozen planes are attacked on sight, while smoke mephits are barely tolerated.

Ice mephits are often used as messengers by creatures of the *Lower Planes*. Thus, when encountered on the *Prime Material Plane*, they are usually on some diabolical errand or mission. They share the other mephits' twisted sense of humour and love of the tasteless and vulgar; delighting in tormenting helpless creatures. They also speak the common mephit tongue as well as their alignment tongue.

They are about 5' tall with wings and fangs. They are translucent blue and radiate an intense chill in a 5' radius about themselves. This chill does no damage, but for each round that anyone is within this area, they must save versus poison or temporarily lose 1 point of strength. Any strength lost will return at the rate of 1 point per turn, once the affected person has withdrawn from the chilled area. If a person's strength drops below 3, then they will lose consciousness until their strength has returned to 3.

Touching an ice mephit with bare flesh causes 1 point of damage per round of contact. Their claws do 1d4 damage plus 1 point of cold damage (2-5 total). They can also breathe forth a cloud of frost (10' diameter), 3 times per day which does 1d8 damage to those within it unless a save versus breath weapon is made in which case half damage is taken. Once per day, an ice mephit can also cast *cool metal*, and, once per hour, they can attempt to *summon* another mephit with a 15% chance of success. There is an 80% chance that the mephit *summoned* will be an ice mephit; 10%, a steam mephit; and 10%, a smoke mephit.

There is an 80% chance that a fire or lava mephit will attack an ice mephit on sight and vice versa.

MIND SHADOW
by A Jewson

No Appearing:	2-8
Armour Class:	3
Movement:	8" (flight)
Hit Dice:	1d8+2
Treasure:	Nil
Attack:	Special
Alignment:	Chaotic/lawful evil
Intelligence:	Average to very

These weird creatures exist mainly on the plane of their ruling demon or devil whom they serve. They are often sent by their masters to the *Prime Material Plane* where they appear as small, shadowy bats. While in this form, they can only be hit by +1 or better weapons and can only remain on the *Prime Material Plane* for 10 rounds unless they manage to *possess* some creature.

Though they have no natural attacks, mind shadows have the ability to possess any living creature or any corpse (but *not* undead ones!).

For a mind shadow to take possession of a corpse, the corpse must have been dead for no longer than a week or be extremely well preserved. The mind shadow must then make contact with the corpse for one round after which the mind shadow will fade into the body. The corpse will then become animated under the complete control of the mind shadow. The corpse will have twice its original number of hit dice regardless of any experience level (a corpse of a 12th level fighter for example would only have twice the number of a 1st level fighter, for example). Once the corpse is reduced to zero hit points, it will collapse and the mind shadow will then be forced to vacate the body and resume its bat-like form for a further 10 rounds after which it will disappear back to its plane of origin unless it gains possession of another creature. A cleric can turn a possessed corpse as a shadow. Successfully turning such a possessed corpse will render it uninhabitable to the mind shadow which will re-emerge and in a flutter of darkness disappear back to its plane of origin.

A mind shadow can also attempt to gain possession of any living creature. To do this it must first remain in contact for 1 round (successful hit against AC10) and during this time attempt to mentally subdue the victim who cannot retaliate in any way during the round. The success of this attempt depends on the 'possession factor' of the individual mind shadow. This factor ranges from 11-30 (1d20+10). The victim must total their intelligence and wisdom (or double their intelligence if a monster) and then add the roll of 1d6. If this total exceeds or equals the mind shadows 'possession factor', they have successfully resisted the subdual attempt. The mind shadow will then disappear to its plane of origin. If however, the victim is unsuccessful in this, the mind shadow will fade into their body and take complete control. A cleric may attempt to turn a live possessed creature but does so as for turning a ghast. If successful, the effect is as described above.

The mind shadow can only possess a live creature for 2-7 days due to the energy required to keep the creature's mind subdued. After this time limit, the mind shadow must return to its home

plane which it can do at will. A mind shadow can never go from the possession of one live creature to the possession of another live creature without returning to its home plane for a rest. It can, however, possess a corpse after voluntarily leaving either a live creature or a corpse.

If a live possessed creature is killed while still possessed, then it becomes a possessed corpse with attributes as described above.

Any possessed creature, alive or dead, gains the mind shadow's magic resistance of 50% but does not become immune to non-magical weapons unless it was before possession. The *exorcise* spell will, if successful, completely destroy the mind shadow. Usually, the threat of this spell will frighten off a mind shadow. Any possessed creature, whether dead or alive, retains its original Armour Class.

While in possession of any body, the mind shadow cannot be harmed in any way, other than a successful *exorcise*, but can only be driven out and then harmed.□

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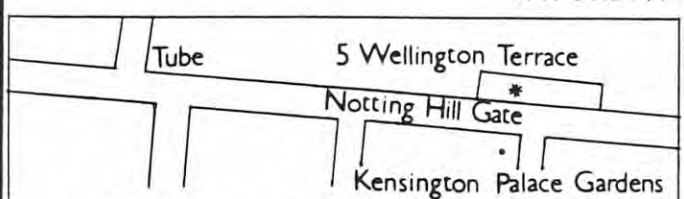

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Treasure Chest *is a regular department for readers'* AD&D/D&D *ideas. This issue, something on technology.*

Don't Touch That Dial!

Technology in AD&D/D&D by Phil Hine

Most referees prefer a neo-medieval setting for their *AD&D/D&D* campaign worlds; after all, such is the flavour imparted by the rules. Occasionally, campaigns are set in Celtic or Aztec realms but the basic *D&D* theme is a universe where magic rather than technology is the dominant force. Dungeon Masters tend to frown on mechanical devices that bespeak a higher technological level than the rest of their world and with good reason. If not strictly controlled they can quickly get out of hand and ruin a games' balance. Often, players are transported into other 'dimensions' crossing into a *Boot Hill* or *Traveller* universe. This has its problems as modern weapons are so much more deadly than swords and spears and player characters able to stand direct hits from field artillery begin to stretch the limits of credulity. Over the years, fanzines have published various 'Technologist' character classes but they have not been widely accepted.

However, if carried out carefully, a few 'Tech' devices can be introduced, if only for the sake of diversity. In our 'real' world, technology is dominant and anything related to magic or the supernatural is thought to be anachronistic. In the magic-rich world of *D&D* technological devices would be as strange as a fully attired magic-user in our world.

Technological devices can be divided into two classes; those which are fully mechanical and those which are semi-mechanical and semi-magical. In addition one should consider whether an item will be of direct value to adventures, such as a tool, or a device which exists in the background of the campaign milieu. Player characters may not find such devices of direct use but adventures could be based around them.

Black Powder

As Gary Chalk and Joe Dever pointed out in *Tabletop Heroes, WD52*, few fantasy gamers incorporate gunpowder into their games. It was used by the ancient Chinese and cropped up in *LOTR*, so it is not unlikely that some *D&D* alchemist could discover it. Of course, getting the mixture right could take a considerable amount of time and even cause a few fatalities. Even when *Black Powder* does appear, it will be difficult to use, being unstable. Dungeons are not the dryest of places and mind out for careless torch-bearers!

Of course, once gunpowder is invented some smart-ass adventurer will want to try building a hand cannon or iron-bolt thrower. The best way to discourage this is to let them try. Medieval hand-guns were non-standardised, short-ranged and more often a liability – a threat to friend and foe alike. All this, plus a long loading time, deafening report (bound to attract all wanderers for miles) should soon send them back to Wizard Prang's trusty fireballs.

Ornithopters

Ornithopters are a type of aerial craft, which remain aloft by flapping huge mechanical wings. They appear in Moorcock's *Runestaff* series and also Frank Herbert's *Dune* series. For *D&D* they could be treated as semi-magical, semi-mechanical, built by skilled artificers, magic-users and alchemists. Rarity of construction knowledge and the cost of this (probably hundreds of thousands of gps) should put them out of reach of most adventurers but they could be 'leased' to a party by a Baron or King, as part of a special mission.

Naturally, suspicious players are going to view Ornithopters with trepidations, the 'you're-not-going-to-get-me-up-in-one-of-those' mentality; not to mention the not unjustified fear that a trip in an Ornithopter will mean encounters with hordes of flying monsters, or an emergency 'ditching' into the ocean so the DM can try out his new 'how to tread water in armour' table.

General Notes

As for devices that may only indirectly affect the player characters, there is quite a wide range of these. The Printing Press is a good example; a fairly innocuous device from the adventurers point of view, but as history has shown, has aided in the downfall of Kings and governments. The Press would probably be rare, linked to Royal or religious Patronage. Some DMs have allowed Printing Presses and it can become a very influential guild in city politics.

Another 'indirect' device is the Glowglobe, a 6" diameter glass, stoppered sphere, filled with a luminous gas or liquid, that lights up a 5x5' area. A Glowglobe's light lasts for 7-20 days before it needs replenishing and costs 100-250gps, each fuelling costing a further 50gps.

Technological devices may cause interesting conflicts between innovators and existing guilds. Any device that threatens existing industries is going to attract its own Luddites. A case in point is the Mechanician who 'invented' a flush toilet. After much bribing he gained an audience with his country's king. In the meantime the city dung-collectors, having got wind (pardon the pun) of the new invention, banded together and hired a magic-user to arrange an 'accident' to happen. Result – the king's audience chamber was flooded with odure and the plumber, for his pains, had his head removed!

It is very difficult to predict the long-term effects of this kind of innovation into a *D&D* campaign. Generally DMs, especially novices should be very careful. Don't introduce a device that is too easy to obtain, or that has no drawbacks. Think how, for example, a flying carpet would be treated in our world, then apply the same principal to technology in a *D&D* universe. Think of the sociological implications of innovation – is it going to be sanctioned or disliked by the authorities, what problems could arise for those using it and how is the device introduced; by tinkering inventor, sage, magic-user or creatures alien to your world (whether from outer space or another dimension.)

Finally, how might the deities in your campaign react? Some may advance and encourage innovation, sending dreams providing the necessary information, to alchemists and engineers. Others, no doubt lamenting the decline of worship in worlds where Technology has superseded magic, would seek to supress the spread of such knowledge and send out their Human agents to destroy manifestations of Technology. Any Paladins out there fancy going steam-engine bashing?

Recommended Reading

Roget Zelanzy's *Lord of Light* – SF classic based on Hindu mythology where 'Gods' keep the rest of humanity from gaining technological know-how, and war with Raksha's (Alien Demons).
L Sprague De Camp: *The Clocks of Iraz; The Rug and the Bull* (short story) – both have elements where innovation is opppsed by tradition. Moorcock's *The Runestaff* series and Frank Herbert's *Dune* – source for Ornithopters and other semi-magical devices.□

Microview *is a regular alternate-monthly department for computer games, edited by Russell Clarke.*

The Psytron!

by Carol Hutchins

This month, Microview *has been ruthlessly chopped down to one page to make way for the large scenario appearing elsewhere. First victims of the column are the GAP and the article I had intended to include (sorry Steve). However, the review of* Psytron (Beyond Software) *by Carol Hutchins remains.*

Up and coming articles in Microview *include planet generation for games such as* Traveller, Star Frontiers *(and other SF rolegames) which was postponed from this issue, a companion of* Car Wars *programmes, all aimed at easing the construction procedure for vehicles, and a both sides of the fence view of* Beyond's *new epic* Lands of Midnight. *And of course, we have the return of the GAPs! Normal service... bzzzt... crackle... will be resumed as soon as possible – RC.*

Psytron by *Beyond Software* for *48k Spectrum* is available from *Games Workshop* and other retail outlets. This is one of those games that seems to grow on you. You are the automated brain organising the defence and maintenance of a space station under attack from extremely hostile forces using spaceships to bomb your vulnerable places and dropping saboteurs to wreck the airlocks, making repairs of the stricken regions near impossible. The saboteurs, which resemble strange three legged cats, bravely give their lives (they have little choice in view of the large explosive charge strapped to their backs and the complete lack of any method of retrieving them after completion of their mission) for the unknown cause of the enemy.

The screen is laid out clearly. The top half consists of a view out over one of the sections of the base. You, the Psytron, are situated in the centre of the base which is laid out around you like a daisy with each petal representing a section. There are ten sections in all and the bottom half of the screen is divided widthways into thirds. Starting at the left hand side of the screen there is a section telling you what the view above represents, eg Pleasure Dome – important to keep intact as damage to this affects the efficiency of your repair crews – and if you stay in one section for more than five seconds, switches to a scrolling display of the damage status of the base.

The next third is a scanner warning you of sectors that are being locked on to by the alien craft or which have saboteurs in them and the final third is a 'Droid window' showing you the view of a small remote droid and its perimeter track which enables you to hunt down the saboteurs.

The first level consists of learning to control the remote droid which chases these 'cats' around a perimeter track and attempts to destroy them before they reach their target. You only have one of these droids and you must teleport him around the base to the right section to catch the saboteur (the right section being illustrated by the scanner as mentioned before). Percentage points are awarded at the completion of the fixed time period, in this case five minutes, for the efficiency with which you protected the base. To reach the next level you must achieve a 'pass mark' ie an average of over 50% in five attempts – one-off flashes of brilliance do you very little good!

The second level introduces you to the art of shooting the alien space craft before they can drop their bombs or their saboteurs. This is done by lining up a cross-hair sight and firing your anti-matter weapon. Accurate shooting gives you a better percentage rating at the end but this is difficult because of the delay in between firing and reaching the target plus the evasive manoeuvres of the aliens. Again to pass this level you must get an average of over 50% over five consecutive turns.

The levels continue to increase in difficulty with the third level being the first real test of your ability as a base defender. Now the 'Skywatch' (level 2) is combined with 'Droid Mode' (level 1) and the aliens will sometimes drop the saboteurs. The action does not stop in the other mode so when you are pursuing a 'Tripedroid' through the bases connecting tunnels the ships are still blowing you to pieces and vice versa!! You also have to survive for ten minutes at this level instead of having five although the passmark is still 50%. To aid you slightly a 'Matter Disruptor' is introduced. This acts just like a *Defender* smart bomb – clearing the sky of all alien craft (visible and invisible). There is a snag – these weapons are unstable, there is a 10% chance of it exploding and destroying the generator and this gets worse if the aliens manage to damage the generator.

Level four introduces the first non-arcade feature of this game, the 'Freezetime Generator'. This consumes large quantities of fuel and literally stops time! The aliens can do nothing while you are in this mode and you can get busy with base station reports. Damage done to different buildings in the installation can be repaired by allocating crew to the task. When called, 'Damage Reports' on each section scroll up the screen. The scrolling stops when all have been viewed. Next the player can scroll through to areas he wishes to repair, when a heavily damaged building appears at the top of the list, pressing 'A' allows you to change the crew allocation there. A maximum of 250 crew can be sent to start work on the repairs. If you have let saboteurs damage the airlocks that lead down to the building being repaired then the work is slowed down proportionately.

So now you have survived ten minutes at this level, five times and have scored an average of 60% (phew!). Level five looms...

'The Psytron has got through to the supply ship and is communicating the needs of the base to its captain. As status reports show the supplies of the base being run down by the ravages of the attack, new weapons, supplies and crew can be ordered. To preserve personnel and keep the installation operative, Psytron must ensure that supplies are kept up to the correct levels.'

This is the mission briefing for level five. Everything from level four continues and you must protect the docking bay to ensure speedy arrival of your supplies via the supply beam. If an alien craft breaks the supply beam then transmission of supplies is terminated. You order what supplies you need from the freezetime mode, so don't go burning your fuel up too fast!

Level six is called the 'Final Conflict' and is level five with the timer counting up to see how long you can last. If you do really well, *Beyond* are offering a QL as a prize for the first person to send them the code that will appear on the screen when you 'conquer' the game. I think it is just possible that the QL will be on general release by the time someone does that!

To sum up – I found it very exciting and thought that the addition of Freeze Time a very novel twist. I would strongly recommend it to anyone who finds playing wave after wave of identical, invincible opponents tedious in the extreme.

Graphics:	**9**	**Long Term Interest:**	**10**
Instructions:	**7**	**(Until you win the QL!)**	
Playability:	**8**	**Value For Money:**	**9**
Overall:			**9**

ACROSS THE TIMELESS WASTES THE TRAVELLERS CAME...SEEKING A NEW WAY

Cresting the ridge of the great crater they were confronted by a strange device.
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Androx rushed along the dimly-lit alleyway, clutching a roll of printed paper to his breast with his left hand.
The cobbles he hurried over were still gleaming from the mist that had hung in the air since morning.
As he turned a corner the moonlight picked out a stalker.
"So that's what's been causing the disturbance".
For the last few nights people had been found half-eaten and strewn about the streets, not to mention other species. Rumours had circulated that a deity was having a "go". The destruction seemed similar.
The wind changed subtly.
The creature turned, its spiked tail thrashed plumes of dust, swirling frantically like momentary wraiths in the lambient, silver light.
Androx eased into the shadows of a doorway and reached into his pouch, hoping the beastie hadn't seen him.
A growl rumbled from its throat as, with head lowered, it advanced in its strange crouched, lurching gait that had suggested the title.
Shaped like a scaled-down Tyrannosaurus Rex, it was about half-size, but infinitely more vicious.
Withdrawing his hand, he flipped a liquorice PK into his mouth.
The slavering monster seemed to grin at Androx. It appeared amused, as if rushing up to tell him a new joke it had heard. Not until it was some twenty-five feet away did Androx do anything. In the blink of an eye-lid he had scrambled its brain into inert aspic with a psyonic blast.
When the dust had settled, Androx measured the distance between its head and his foot.
"Damn! Only two and a half spans. I did better with that wyvern last week".
He cursed silently. What was he going to tell everyone in the Psyonic Circle this week?
With a shrug of his shoulders he turned homeward.
Entering via the iron-studded door, which he duly barred and bolted, he got himself a drink and sat in the armchair by the fireplace, unrolling the latest copy of "White Dwarf" and settling down to read.
It wasn't until he got to "Microview" that he spilt his drink.
There, in that advertisement, was the strange edifice that had recently haunted his dreams.
The letters had always been blurred, glimpsed through mists, or lost between sheets of rain, a portent of some impending doom.
But now, there they were – "The Nemesis Collection".
Glancing down the page his eyes caught a familiar word.
His name.
He looked closer.
Astonishment and fear contorted his face as he read of the encounter still fresh in his mind.
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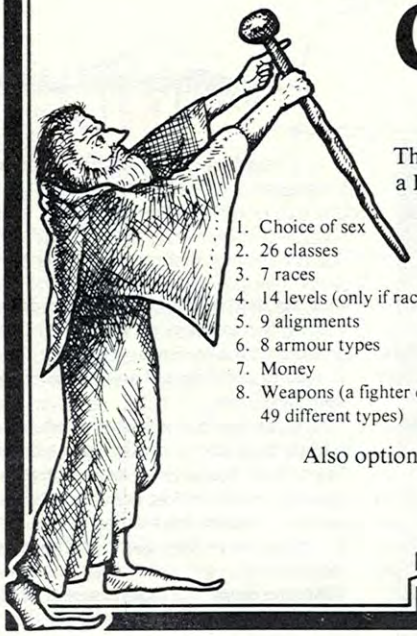

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WHERE TO GO FOR THE BEST IN GAMES AND SOFTWARE

GRENADIER

Doug Cowie of *Games of Liverpool* phoned the other day to tell us about the new boxed figure sets from *Grenadier* that will be arriving soon.

Most exciting is a new series called *Ring of the Dragonlord*; the first four sets feature Black, Red, White and Brass Dragons along with part of an altar and a jewel. The altars will fit together with the rest in the series (at least 12 in total) to form the full altar of the *Dragonlord!* Opponents for this deadly array can be found in the *Dragonkillers* set.

Warhammer fans with undead armies should find the *Mammoth of the Undead Legion* and his pals the *Death Dragon* and *Folklore Creatures of the Night* useful additions to their collections, while any players of comic book RPG's should watch out for the *Superheroes* and *Supervillains* figure sets.

Doug promises that all the above sets should be available by the time you read this and will retail at £7.95 apart from *Dragonkillers* and *Folklore Creatures* which will retail at £5.50.

MEMORANDUM

FROM: Jerv & Jon
TO: WD Readers

Being a contributing editor for WD does have its perks - one of which is phoning up all the film companies trying to get news (and, more importantly, comp' tickets) for all the new sci-fi and fantasy movies. While we didn't do too well on the ticket front (sniff) we did find out some titbits of infomation.

Pop stars, it seems, are the people to have in your sci-fi/fantasy movie, not only is Sting starring in Dune, The Movie (which will be released in December), but Grace Jones has a part (as an Amazon – what else?) in the new Conan movie.

Star Trek III will be out soon in the UK - in America it's grossed more than Indiana Jones & The Temple of Doom so it should be worth seeing.

Work has started on a movie version of H P Lovecraft's The Colour out of Space set in the Cthulhu mythos, so start saving those SAN points COC fans!!!

See you next month

Jerv & Jon

ESCAPING FROM TSR'S DUNGEON

TSR have announced that after months, no make that *years* of waiting, the Companion set for *Basic D&D* is at last in print and will be available in the UK this September! Not having seen a copy yet all we can say is that, since it took so long to get out, it had better be very good indeed!!

At the same time *TSR* will be releasing; *Marvel Superheroes*, a simple RPG based on *Marvel's* comic book characters; *Dungeonmaster*, a fantasy board-game that ties in with the D&D cartoon series soon to be shown on BBC children's television; and several new modules, including CM1 - the first module to go with the *Companion Set*.

Unfortunately we don't have any information on the prices for the above goodies, but I'd guess (and I do mean guess, don't take this as official) that the *Companion Set* and *Marvel Superheroes* will retail at about £9.50

STOP PRESS STOP PRESS

We have just learn't that *TSR* have acquired the license for an Indiana Jones RPG. Our sources state that they might even be running a prototype version at *Games Day '84*. Watch out for it (and lets hope it doesn't take as long to get out as the *Companion Set!!*)

STOP PRESS STOP PRESS

BEYOND MIDNIGHT

Mike Singleton the designer of the Starlord PBM computer moderated game, has produced *'The Lords of Midnight'* for *Beyond*, first of 3 'epic' games set in the same universe.

Lords of Midnight's main new feature is that there are some 32,000 screens allowing *Beyond* to use a new idea called 'landscaping' - this means that the characters can be moved & the background is redrawn each time giving the new perspective & view.

The game can be played as either a quest type adventure using two of the characters in the story, or as a tactical wargame, or both.

At present it is only available for the *Spectrum 48K* but will soon be converted for use with the *Commodore 64*. It retails at the reasonable price of £9.95.

NEXT ISSUE: *Rammas Island*, Part 2 of the *Sunfire's Heart*; *Sky-Rig*, a *Traveller* scenario; Ninja's as player characters in *Bushido*, *RuneQuest* and *D&D*, plus all the regular features and much more!

NEW CONCEPT FOR PBM GAMES

Mitre Games have come up with a great new idea to spread the word on Play-by-Mail gaming; very soon they will be releasing boxed editions of *Tribes of Crane* and *Starmaster* (two of the most popular PBM games in the UK) that will be available from your local games shop for £9.95 each.

Much like ordinary boardgames the sets will contain all the rules, charts etc. that you need to play, but they will also have a voucher for three moves (and the set up fees) in the first PBM game in which you participate!

PBM gaming is an exciting part of our hobby that deserves more exposure - hopefully these new *Mitre* boxed games will do just that!!

DIFFERENT WORLDS - DIFFERENT REALITY!!

Contrary to a recent gossip column in *Different Worlds*, George Schubel *Jr* has not died of a heart attack. Apparently they were misinformed about the recent heart attack suffered by George Schubel *Sr* who has retired from company affairs. Though he did indeed suffer a heart attack, he has almost completely recovered. Mr Schubel (the younger) is the designer of *Tribes of Crane*, *Star Venture*, *Strategic Conflict*, *Computer Boxing* and we hope, many more computer games in the future!

GOLDEN HEROES

Apologies to all those who have been eagerly waiting for the new *Golden Heroes* RPG after seeing the advertisment in the last two issues of *WD*. Due to unforeseen production hold ups *Golden Heroes* won't be ready until September, We'll have more news next issue on the exact date.

GOBBLEDIGOOK by Bil

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'Vacuous what?', the masses cry. 'Grimoire', floats back a tormented voice. It's the 'zine that some guy called Richard Roberts at 52 Whalesmead Road, Bishopstoke, Eastleigh, Hampshire sells for 50p, and it contains a solo in a mental asylum, an AD&D module, hints on computer adventures and more!

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Clubs, contacts and events can be advertised once at no charge up to a maximum of 40 words. Further insertions at the rate of 5p per word.

Oi, Snuurg
Drofaels him saying Snuurg nonose biggest wimp this side of Snake Mountains. Also Mildred Plagueface love Pretty Boy (old man) Antares. PS Me sure me can smell dwarf!

W-S-M Area
Male 18, experienced *AD&D* player, with knowledge of *RuneQuest, D&D, StarFrontiers* and *Traveller* looking to play in a campaign in any of the above or others. Tel: W-S-M 32204 and ask for David White – or write to: 13 Exford Close, Coronation Estate, W-S-M, Avon.

Scarborough Wargamers
Are you struggling to find people to play against? Come to Scarborough Tech (near hospital) and join the club. We play *AD&D, RuneQuest*, figure gaming (figures supplied) and a wide selection of board games. Contact: P Harbron, 7 Rutland Terrace, Queens Parade, Scarborough, North Yorks.

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Daring *James Bond 007* role-players/GMs, aged 10-16, living in Harrow and surrounding areas. Contact: Marc Henry, 20 Highview, Pinner, Middlesex HA5 3PA. Tel: (01) 866 3412.

Help!
14-yr old in South Wales area seeks club/group. Plays *D&D* and *T&T*. Will play most other RPGs. Contact: Martin Ford, Garred Wen, Llanarthne, Carmarthen, Dyfed SA32 8JR.

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The supplements to *Original D&D*, ie *Greyhawk, Blackmoor* and *Eldritch Wizardry*. Also wanted, *Judges Guild D&D Reference Sheets*. Any reasonable price paid. Ring J E Shelton on: Nottingham (0602) 581110.

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Established *AD&D* group is looking for enthusiatic new members aged 18+. Experience is not essential, but a lively imagination is. For more information, contact: Julian (Newport 854031) or Mike (Newport 280932).

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Guide Wanted
Aged (30), but not yet senile, novice RPGer seeks players/club who will help guide him through strange realms and fantastic worlds. *AD&D, Traveller* or will attempt to learn others. Contact: Paul Hardy, 23A East St, Rochford, Essex SS4 1DB.

Ashford
RPG/Boardgamer, primarily *AD&D*, seeks like minded opponents/players (18-30) from Ashford, Maidstone and surrounding area. Contact: Nick Lefevre, 35 North St, Biddenden, Ashford, Kent TN27 8BA.

Grimsby
Players/DM wanted in Waltham, Grimsby area for *Basic D&D*. Newcomer to RPG. Contact: Simon Michael (14), 49 Archer Rd, Waltham, Grimsby, South Humberside DN37 0UF.

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18-yrs, complete novice, needs help to break into the RPG world, willing to learn any games, also like to hear from anyone, anywhere (especially females). Contact: Kev, 17 Gargrave Close, Rastrick, Brighouse, W Yorks HD6 3LL. Tel: Brighouse 711800.

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Contact: RPG Club (Guy), Maidenhead 31963.

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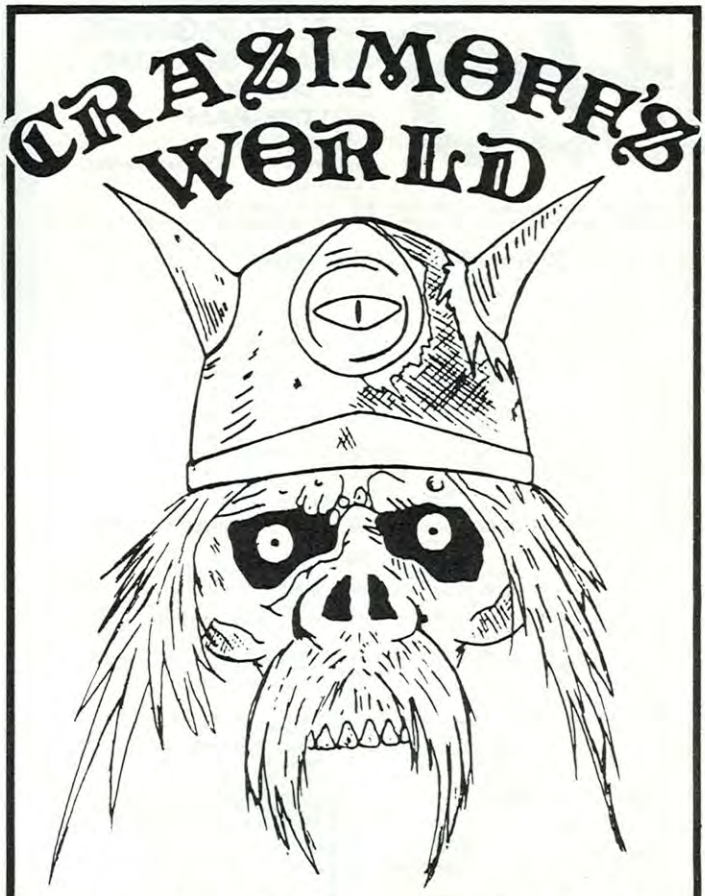

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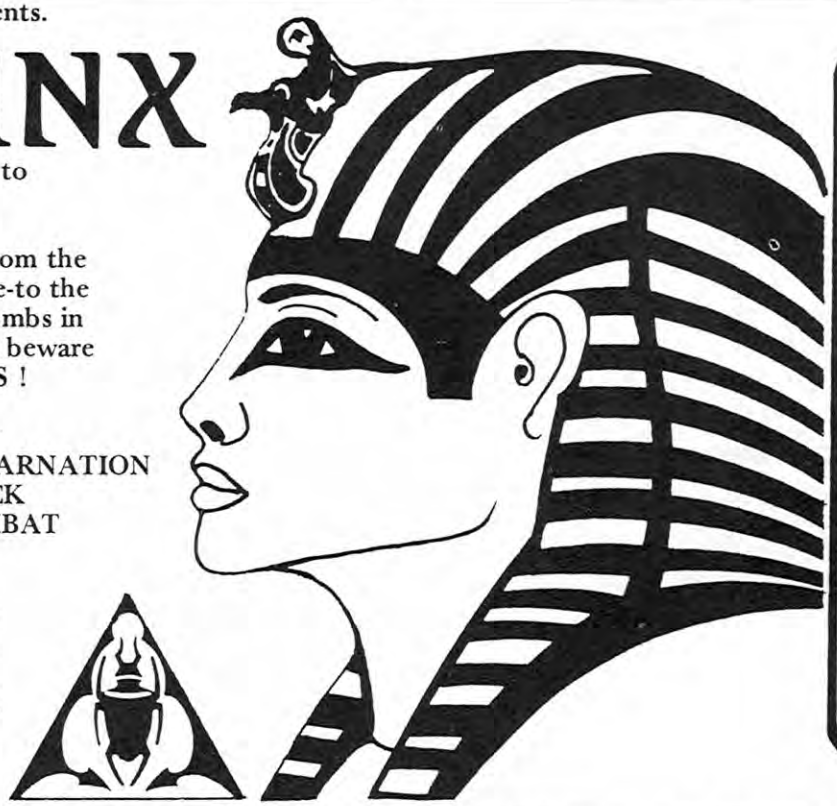

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